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# Shifting Grounds:

## How Urban Gardening Practices Enact the Relations between Play and Work



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Bachelor of Science in Human Geography and Urban Planning  
Master of Science in Urban Geography

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# Abstract

This thesis discusses how urban gardening practices enact the relations between play and work, based upon a comparative ethnographic study of allotment, community and guerrilla gardening in London. It deploys participant observation and garden go-alongs, and makes use of photography to engage with the corporealities, textures, and creativities of these practices.

Rather than binary conceptions of play and work, this thesis understands urban gardening practices as creating entangled contingencies of play and work in social life. It sees urban gardens as paradoxical spaces of play and work; and thereby develops cultural geography's understanding of gardens as sites imbued with multiple and contradictory meanings. Gardening is enjoyed for its visceral experience confirming ideas of play as being fun, embodied and absorbing. Yet, it also demands work, because this seemingly voluntary activity implicates social, material and legal obligations. Furthermore, the research demonstrates how objects travel across spaces of play and work, as permeable garden boundaries are made and unmade constantly. By showing these relations between inside and outside, the thesis challenges ideas of the 'garden' and the 'playground' as fixed, enclosed time-spaces set apart from everyday life. Moreover, this ambiguity is further exemplified by how gardeners have varying perceptions of play, which overlap but also contest each other.

This research also enhances debates on public spaces in cities, and more-than-human geographies, by showing how gardening breathes life into the urban through on-going encounters between people, plants and animals. It identifies four types of encounters, namely festive, chance, care-taking and contestation. The range of others encountered is multiple and diverse, and gardeners' openness towards the contingencies of inhabiting these urban spaces alludes to a playful mode of engaging with the world.

The thesis argues that urban gardening practices feed into, complement and offer an alternative to neoliberal conceptions of play and work in post-fordist economies.



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# 1. Introduction

*Sue is digging in the soil when I approach her allotment plot. She is trying to get rid of her bindweed, which has spread over a raised bed and has also crept up the grape vine. Without much hesitation she starts talking whilst she continues to dig and pull out the roots of the bindweed. I join in, removing the bindweed from the grape vine. Last night, she hardly slept. Woke up in the middle of the night. Heart beating. She had been to her mother's flat to clean it. Sort stuff out. In the house she was surrounded by her mother's belongings. It felt as if she was still alive. Clothes on their hangers, the kettle on the stove, pillows on the bed. Everyday objects all untouched and in place. It made Sue think about death. When one dies, everything is just left behind. Whilst I am untangling vine leaves and bindweed, she tells me that the visit spurred upsetting thoughts. Could she have taken better care of her mother? I taste a grape that Sue passes over. Sweet and sour. She resumes. This morning she has done a paid job in a client's garden. Due to the lack of sleep, she has cancelled the garden work scheduled for the afternoon. The rain was a good excuse. Instead of sitting at home and thinking about her mother all the time, she decided to go to her allotment plot. That is where I bumped into her. Sue says: 'here I forget about everything'. She is happy she has come down to her plot. Digging, making herself tired, our chat continues. The sky is cloudy, but it's dry and warm for a day in September. We are surrounded by green beans, verbena, tomatoes, and the grape vine. Digging, removing the bindweed, snacking on a grape.*

This vignette speaks to some of the key themes I will discuss in this thesis. It illustrates what gardening as a practice in the city might mean to people, and how the urban garden can be understood as an ambiguous space in which notions of both play and work are enacted. First of all, this story evokes the visceral experience of being in the garden and doing garden work. Tasting the grapes, pulling the bindweed has a certain affective intensity that alludes to play. Furthermore, it shows how gardening together can open up a space for conversation. The shared embodied practice allows for chat about the recent passing of Sue's mother. Thirdly, considering play and work, Sue makes a clear distinction between her paid work as a freelance



gardener, which involves looking after her clients' private gardens, and the unpaid, voluntary gardening on her allotment plot. Although, both involve cultivating green spaces, Sue ascribes a different meaning to her practices at the allotment. Feeling sad, Sue cancels her scheduled paid work, and instead enjoys pottering about on her own allotment plot. Moreover, she portrays her allotment plot as a space of escape where she can forget about everything. However, the conversation we had demonstrates the exact opposite: memories of her mother surface, remarks about her paid garden work are made, stories about her family are shared. Thus, this encounter exemplifies the blurred boundaries between the 'inside' world of play on the allotment plot and the 'outside' world of paid work and family relations. Rather than clear-cut boundaries, it shows how her gardening is bound up with the rest of her everyday life. This vignette also fleshes out how (semi-)public gardens can produce spaces that allow for spontaneous meetings between people, plants and animals, spaces in which social relations are not necessarily instrumental. They rather reflect an ethics of caring for others and a playfulness in relating to others. It is these complexities between notions of play and work that I will explore and analyse in depth in this thesis.

Sue does not stand alone in her endeavour to look after an allotment plot in London. During the last decade, gardening has gathered momentum in cities, and there is renewed interest in growing vegetables, fruit and flowers in urban spaces in both Western and non-Western settings. A very wide range of gardening practices is shaping the urban environment, ranging from the old style allotment garden, to moss-graffiti on walls, to mobile gardens on the back of bicycles, to urban farms situated on rooftops. Urban dwellers practice gardening in different ways: as a long-term community effort in a shared space; as ephemeral guerrilla interventions in neglected council flowerbeds; or by simply tending plants in private gardens. All kinds of positive effects are frequently attributed to gardening. It is portrayed as fun, as enhancing one's health, as contributing to a sustainable urban environment and as producing tasty organic vegetables and fruits. This increasing appetite for 'getting one's hands dirty' caught my eye as a cultural geographer, triggering my curiosity and making me pose social and spatial questions. In this thesis, I work with and critically address this popular understanding of

gardening in cities. Through an ethnography of three urban gardening practices, I discuss why people garden, how it produces particular places in cities, and what happens socially when people, plants and animals encounter each other.

Thus, gardening in the city appears in different forms. I have chosen to focus on gardening as an everyday, voluntary, unpaid activity, practiced by people in public urban spaces in their spare time. I have narrowed the focus down further to allotment, community and guerrilla gardeners. Allotment gardeners rent a plot on a site which is usually provided by the council; community gardeners share a garden space in the city; and guerrilla gardeners operate in urban spaces that they do not own or rent. These different ways of gardening in cities stem from different historical moments which can be traced in their social practices. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, small pieces of land were allotted to the poor as a minor form of compensation for the loss of access to land caused by the enclosures. This was a paternalistic project, aimed at keeping the poor out of the pub and away from criminality by offering them the opportunity to grow their own fruit and vegetables. Industrialists limited the size of allotments to ensure that their workers would not be exhausted by gardening activities in their free time (Hoyles, 1991, p. 271). While allotment sites are the products of nineteenth century industrialisation, the idea of community and guerrilla gardening as a particular way of gardening in the city derives from the green activism of the 1970s. An example of this movement is the New York based *Green Guerrillas*, a group of activists and artists gathered around the figure of Liz Christy, who started greening vacant plots and abandoned pieces of land in the almost bankrupt city (Ferguson 1999). A similar manifestation of a garden set up by a group of people for the community is *Meanwhile Gardens* in London (McCullough 1978), a community garden which not only provided a green space for members of the public, but also organised social gatherings such as a music festival (McKay 2011, p. 178). Although guerrilla gardening can be traced back to the 1970s, it has become much more prominent recently, with the most visible group in London being centred around guerrilla gardener and author Richard Reynolds. I expected to generate a set of data that would make it possible to identify patterns among and detect differences between the three gardening practices.

This research on play and work as enacted in urban gardening is situated in the discipline of human geography, specifically in cultural geography. Gardens are often portrayed as peaceful green spaces of escape from the spheres of work and the bustling city. Instead of reproducing this simplified understanding of gardens as enclosed and peaceful spaces which are pockets of ‘paradise on Earth’, this thesis builds upon and extends the work of cultural geographers (Crouch 2001, DeSilvey 2003, Longhurst 2006, Bhatti *et al.* 2009) who explore alternative understandings of gardens, picturing them as complex contradictory spaces, ambiguous and always in the process of being made. I contribute to these authors’ arguments on how gardening breaks down binaries into entangled contingencies: nature and culture, work and leisure, private and public. This discussion is informed by the concept of paradoxical space (Rose 1993), in which contradictory notions co-exist.

Although these authors offer a critical framework for understanding urban garden practices, they do not discuss the garden in depth as a space for both play and work. Yet, as various sociologists have shown (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, Rojek 2010), the boundary between play and work has also become increasingly blurred and ambiguous in recent decades. This suggests that exploring paradoxical spaces of play and work should also be addressed by cultural geographies of gardening. The particular lens of this research, the enactment of complex relations between notions of play and work, will address these gaps in the literatures of cultural geography. This thesis will speak to current debates in cultural geography on embodied practiced landscapes (Hinchliffe 2002, Reckwitz 2002, Degen *et al.* 2010, Hitchings 2010), more-than-human geographies (Lorimer 2005, Ginn 2017) and urban encounters (Ahmed 2000, Massey 2005, Watson 2006, Stevens 2007a, Wilson 2016).

This leads me to introduce the main research question of the thesis:

***‘How do different urban gardening practices enact the relations between play and work?’***

The research thus focuses on gardening practices, and analyses how ideas of play and work are created whilst gardening is done. This allows for detailed micro-level analysis of how

practices of gardening enact multiple and complex relations between the categories of play and work. Furthermore, the research compares ‘different’ gardening practices: allotment, community and guerrilla. In order to structure the research, I have worked with three research subquestions. The first of these: ‘*Why do people garden?*’ guides the exploration of how participants understand and talk about their gardening practices and discusses participants’ reasons for being involved in gardening and how this relates to qualities ascribed to both play and work (see Chapter 4). The second subquestion: ‘*How do the embodied practices of gardening create distinct time-spaces for play and/or work?*’ shapes the analysis of how gardeners’ practices both confirm and contest the idea of the garden as an enclosed space and the conceptualisation of the playground as a bounded space. It examines multiple practices of boundary making (see Chapter 5). The third subquestion: ‘*How do encounters between humans and non-humans which occur during gardening cultivate socialities in the city?*’ drives an examination of the social interactions between people, plants and animals which take place whilst gardeners cultivate their gardens. It discusses multiple forms of encounter and how these speak to ideas of play and work (See Chapter 6). Hence, these three research subquestions help to address the main research question, which concerns practices of gardening and how these enact the relations between play and work.

This research is shaped by its ethnographic approach. I have joined in gardening practices, conducted garden go-along interviews, studied historical and policy documents and made use of photography. Ethnography has allowed me to gain insight into how people do gardening and how they understand and feel about their practices. As Crang and Cook argue, ethnography’s ‘engagement with the “real world” messiness’ (2007, p. 14) is the ‘most valuable contribution’ (2007, p. 14) it can make. In addition, I hope that in the following pages gardener’s voices speak through the academic analysis.

Over a period of one year, I have gardened with allotment, community and guerrilla gardeners; listening to their stories, taking photos, sharing jokes, harvesting tomatoes and digging in the rain. This engagement has allowed me to compare gardeners’ practices, their reflections and feelings and my own experiences. The data encompasses field notes, go-along



transcripts, historical documentation and photographs. These materials were generated in the ‘field’, constituted in encounters between participants and the researcher. Negotiating social relations in the field requires openness to the unexpected. During fieldwork, I was guided by the research questions, but also followed up on events as they unfolded. Although it was sometimes challenging, the duration and comparative nature of the fieldwork enhances the analysis; and offers an opportunity to depict a rich and nuanced image of urban gardening practices. This comparative analysis of urban gardening has produced not only text-based insights but also visual accounts. I have used photography as an integral part of the ethnography, and these photos have been analysed in relation to the other material generated. This has resulted in three photo-essays, each of which discusses a particular theme.

For this ethnography, I have studied allotment, community and guerrilla gardeners in London. I introduce each of these case studies here. Starting with the allotment gardeners (Figure 1), I conducted fieldwork at ‘Chitts Hill Allotment and Garden Society’ in Wood Green, Haringey, North London. Figure 2 shows the location of the allotment on Chitts Hill in Wood Green Urban District in 1912 (see top right of the image).



**Figure 1 Pete at his allotment plot**



**Figure 2 Cut-out from Wood Green Map 1912 (Ordnance Survey Office 1993)**

Chitts Hill Allotment and Garden society has existed since 1911, when 98 of the current total of 201 plots were provided (Pinching 2000, p. 116). A typical allotment plot is 10 poles large, being equal to 250 square metres, or about the size of a doubles tennis court (The National Allotment Society 2016). Allotment holders reflect the mixed ethnic communities of the urban area: Black, Asian, white British, Cypriot, Greek, Italian, Kurdish, Portuguese and Turkish, and the growing techniques and degrees of experience of the allotment holders are as diverse as their ethnic backgrounds. The allotment site is owned and supervised by Haringey Council, but volunteers organised in a committee do the majority of maintenance and management. During week-days and weekends, I joined allotment gardeners on their plots and talked to them. Through these consecutive visits I enhanced my understanding of their gardening practices and experiences.





**Figure 3 Garden coordinator at the Eastern Curve Garden entrance**



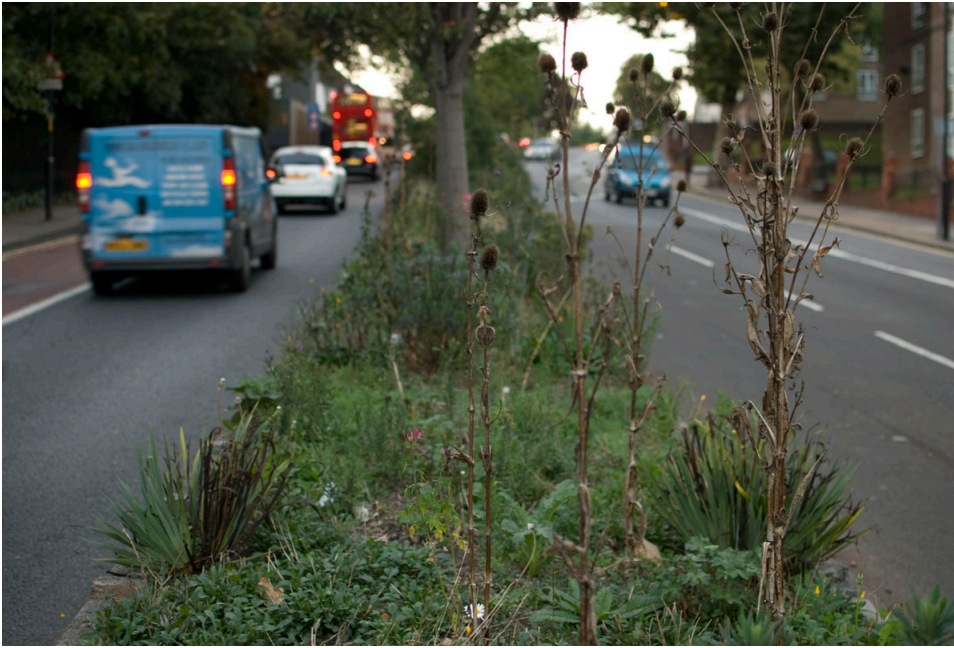
**Figure 4 Community Garden volunteers trimming lavender bushes**

The community garden I researched and where I volunteered is the Eastern Curve Garden in Dalston, Hackney, East London, run by members of the local activist group Open Dalston and designated as a garden space for the community to garden and spend time in. Situated among car-parks, old warehouses and a new hotel, it is small green space open to the public throughout the year. Apart from raised beds full of flowers, fruit and vegetables, there are

patches of grass to sit on and a sand pit for small children to play in. The garden has a self-run café, a wood-fired pizza oven, a barn and a glass house for gatherings. The neighbourhood is gentrifying rapidly; multiple apartment blocks are being built, long standing tenants are being pushed out because of rising rents, and the busy local market will be redeveloped in the near future. The community garden has a complex history; it is the product of a collaboration between the local activist group Open Dalston, muf architecture studio, J&L Gibbons landscape architecture studio, Exyzt architecture, the Arcola Theatre, Hackney Council and the Mayor of London (Long *et al.* 2012, pp. 14–15). The garden was proposed in the study *Making Space in Dalston* (J&L-Gibbons and Muf-architecture/art 2009), but it had already been kick-started for the Barbican's Radical Natures exhibition in 2008. Initially it was set up as a temporary project, but it has been run as garden community space since 2008, and the local community is fighting hard for it to remain in place. Since the initial funding finished, the garden has been run as a social enterprise. The revenues generated by the café are used to keep the garden open and running for the community. I focused my fieldwork on the weekly garden volunteering sessions on Saturday afternoons joining in with a changing group of volunteers, with between 2 and 20 participants each afternoon.



**Figure 5 Elefest guerrilla gardening dig**



**Figure 6 Guerrilla garden patch in South London**

Unlike the previous two case studies, the guerrilla gardeners I studied are not limited to one physical site or group of gardeners. Due to the practice being more volatile and flexible, I engaged with guerrilla gardeners in five different locations spread across North, South and East London. Most of these guerrilla gardeners had taken over raised beds or tree-pits neglected by the local council, or had intervened in small patches of private land that were publicly accessible. Without gaining official permission beforehand, these gardeners sowed seeds, planted bulbs and cultivated seedlings in these spatially dispersed patches. Furthermore, each of these guerrilla gardeners was active online, posting and sharing their garden activities on blogs and social media. I would join the guerrilla gardener(s) whenever a ‘dig’ took place, and I also kept myself up to date with their online gardening practices.

This thesis, situated in cultural geography, contributes to the understanding that the distinctions between the categories of play and work are increasingly difficult to identify. In the following pages, I explore in detail the complex relations between work and play constituted by urban gardening practices. The thesis is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical framework of the research. It discusses several bodies of literature, dealing respectively with conceptions of play and work, urban

gardening, embodied practices, more-than-human geographies and urban encounters. This discussion results in the formulation of the research questions that guide further analysis.

- Chapter 3 encompasses a detailed description of the research process and reflections upon the research methods applied. It discusses doing ethnographies, participant observation, go-along, archival work and photography. Additionally, it introduces the case studies, discusses research ethics and sheds lights on how the data was analysed and written up.
- Photo-essay A visually explores the materialities and corporealities of urban gardening practices. This series of images evokes the feeling of '*getting your hands dirty*'.
- Chapter 4 addresses the research subquestion: '*Why do people garden?*' It examines the qualities participants ascribe to gardening and how these allude to ideas of play and work. The key themes discussed are: enjoying, achieving and volunteering.
- Photo-essay B records and analyses how the borders between garden spaces and the 'outside world' take shape. It is a systematic documentation of practices of demarcating the borders of allotment plots, community raised beds and guerrilla garden patches.
- Chapter 5 discusses the research subquestion: '*How do the embodied practices of gardening create distinct time-spaces for play and/or work?*' It explores three different modes of making and unmaking garden boundaries: imaginative, affective, and material.
- Photo-essay C presents a visual inventory of urban gardeners' playful material practices. This series of images explores the playfulness of gardeners when they re-use objects and transform garden spaces.
- Chapter 6 asks: '*How do encounters between humans and non-humans, taking place whilst gardening, cultivate socialities in the city?*' By analysing what happens when gardeners, plants and animals meet, this chapter introduces four forms of encounter: festive, chance, care, and contestation.
- Chapter 7 draws conclusions from the analysis presented, as well as opening up to address the wider relevance of this thesis and identifying future areas of research.





## Chapter 2. Making Sense of Urban Gardening

In this thesis, I critically examine how the relations between play and work are enacted through urban gardening practices. Sections 2.1 and 2.2 of this chapter discuss how the categories of play and work have been conceptualised in sociology and sets out current debates on urban gardening in cultural geography. This sets up the basis for the research questions introduced in Section 2.3, which will help to identify how this thesis contributes to cultural geography's understanding of urban gardening practices, and the notions of play and work.

I will argue that it is important to study play-work relations, as these two concepts are one of the main ways in which contemporary urban social life is structured, enacted and experienced. Furthermore, I will suggest that an ethnographic study of urban gardening offers an opportunity to detail the blurred, complex field of relations between play and work. This chapter thus brings these two social science debates into conversation with each other, and in so doing, provides the rationale for this research.

### *2.1 Thinking through the relations between play and work*

This section discusses the literature on play and work, analysing the shifting conceptions of the relation between play and work as being products of particular times and places. First, I will unpack how the processes of industrialisation made play and work into opposites (Rojek 1995, Connor 2005). Based on this discussion of the binary conception of play and work, I show how in our post-Fordist society these relations are more complex and blurred, with play being both centred and marginalised in relation to work. I will argue that current debates conceptualise a very particular version of play: one that highlights the deployment of the concept of *play* for commercial ends. This literature critically examines how *play* is put to *work* in the post-Fordist economy (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005b, Rojek 2010, Butler *et al.* 2011). In this context, play stands for flexibility, fun, creativity and autonomy. I will suggest that other understandings of the relation between play and work are thereby marginalised, and need further exploration. To do so, I propose to revisit the works of the scholars Johan Huizinga and Roger Caillois (1961),



who wrote insightfully and extensively on play. Through a study of urban gardening, I will outline how bringing *Homo ludens* to the urban garden will help to specify alternative play-work relations, which leads into the following section on the cultural geographies of urban gardening.

### **2.1.1 Play and Work as Binaries: Industrial Society**

Processes of industrialisation and modernity pushed play from being at the centre of everyday life to the realms of mystery and fantasy (Connor 2005), introducing rationalised notions of work and recreation and drawing clear boundaries between the categories of play and work in social life. The industrialisation of Great Britain transformed everyday life fundamentally between the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century and the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One of the main processes in this period was the rationalisation of work, meaning that work discipline was required in the new industries. In his discussion of play and work, Connor (2005) argues that, with the introduction of public time and regulated working hours, there was also the introduction of ‘free time’ as one form of the surpluses which were diffused unequally through society. This ‘empty time’ was a new social phenomenon, which had not existed in the medieval period, a product of the disciplining of work by a synchronised public time. Thompson analyses these shifts in notations of time: ‘Time is now currency: it is not passed but spent’ (1967, p. 61). He argues that industrial capitalism introduced regimes of time-measurement, which were deployed to discipline and exploit factory workers. It also produced clear demarcations between ‘work’ and ‘life’, in contrast to previous peasant societies in which life and work on the farm were more mixed, being more oriented towards tasks.

This rationalisation of work made play into its direct opposite, separating the spheres of play and work (Connor 2005, p. 5). Connor analyses how political and economic changes conditioned social life, and thus also shaped academic debates and writing on the relations between work and play. He shows how in conjunction with the rationalisation of work, play became seen as irresponsible, with mysterious powers being ascribed to it. Thus, the processes of industrial capitalism created the modern notion of separate, opposing spheres of play and

work. As a consequence of industrialisation the idea of leisure also emerged.

Rojek (1995) analyses the role of leisure in modernity, showing how it became a form of rational purposive activity that complemented work, an artificial escape from everyday working life. Similarly to Connor (2005), Rojek argues that the processes of industrialisation constructed a notion of work as being the most ‘fundamental human need’ (Rojek 1995, p. 192), and consequently play was marginalised. Furthermore, the free time that came with the temporal fragmentation of social life had to be utilised to enhance one’s ‘personal market capacity’ (Rojek 1995, p. 192). The political economy of industrialisation produced forms of rational recreation. Leisure time could not be about being idle; rather, its sole purpose was to regain one’s capacities for the next working day. Furthermore, industrial capitalism disciplined work and exploited workers. Work became waged labour, time-bound and shaped by the standardisation of production processes and scrutiny of outcomes.

For a better understanding of the relations between play and work, and in particular how play is conceptualised in industrial society, I turn to Huizinga’s book *Homo Ludens – A study of the play element in culture* (1950). In this book, the Dutch cultural historian explores the nature and significance of play as a cultural phenomenon in language, civil society, law, war, religion, poetry, theatre, philosophy and art. Huizinga’s work ‘forms part of a tradition stretching at least from Friedrich Schiller’s *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Mankind* down through the nineteenth-century utopian socialism of figures like Charles Fourier to the 1960s thought of Herbert Marcuse and the situationists (Smith 2005, p. 428). The book *Homo Ludens* is a key reference in studies of leisure (Rojek 2010), games (Frissen *et al.* 2015) and organisations (Butler *et al.* 2011), but it has been largely ignored by cultural geography. Noteworthy exceptions are Woodyer’s (2012) research on the material cultures of children playing with toys, Harker’s (2005) discussion of playing and the affective time-spaces of the children’s playground, and Stevens’ (2007) analysis of the ‘ludic city’.

At the time of writing the book, Huizinga was a professor at Leiden University in the Netherlands, and was part of the international academic community (van der Lem 1993, p. 257). His initial ideas for the book were developed in a lecture he gave at the Warburg Institute in

London (Gombrich 1973, p. 275). Huizinga had previously written extensively about medieval society, for example in *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (Huizinga 1919) and *Erasmus* (1924). His thinking and writing on *play* were clearly influenced by these particular research interests in Erasmus and the rich cultural history of the Middle Ages. In addition, the ideas developed in *Homo Ludens* are informed by the volatile politics of 1930s Western Europe, characterised by fresh memories of the First World War and in ‘terrifying anticipation of the no less outrageous barbarisms of the emerging fascist movements’ (Frissen *et al.* 2015, p. 16). Huizinga’s writings on play suggest that play and work became opposite and bounded categories during industrialisation, and in line with Connor and Rojek’s analysis, Motte deems the book ‘the key modernist statement on play’ (Motte 2009, p. 16).

In his foreword, Huizinga (1950) introduces a third function of man. Besides *Homo sapiens* and *Homo faber*, he proposes the inclusion of *Homo ludens* in our nomenclature. He makes clear from the very start that this scholarly project is opposed to the professionalisation and rationalisation of society, foregrounding instead the irrational, non-instrumentalised *fun* of play. Connor argues that Huizinga tries to preserve play from ‘the encroaching, universal law of instrumentalisation...through a higher law, the autarchic law of its own lawlessness. Play must become a self-regulating republic if its seriousness is to be sustained and its autonomy guaranteed from squalid getting and spending’ (Connor 2005, p. 6), and Sennett makes a similar observation on Huizinga drawing ‘a sharp line between play and work’ (Sennett 2008, p. 270). In the final chapter, ‘The Play-Element in Contemporary Civilization’, Huizinga takes a critical stance towards industrial development, technology and the increasing emphasis on economic forces in society:

*With the enormous development of industrial power, advancing from the steam-engine to electricity, the illusion gains ground that progress consists in the exploitation of solar energy. As a result of this luxation of our intellects the shameful misconception of Marxism could be put about and even believed, that economic forces and material interests determine the course of the world. This grotesque over-estimation of the economic factor was conditioned by our worship of technological progress, which was itself the fruit of rationalism and utilitarianism after they had killed the mysteries and acquitted man of guilt and sin.* (Huizinga 1950, p. 192)

Thus, Huizinga tries to *free* play. He attempts to set it apart from the ordinary world, from capitalist society. He critiques the projects of rationalism and utilitarianism and introduces the figure of *Homo ludens*. Sennett puts it evocatively: ‘For Huizinga, the rigors of the Industrial Revolution caused adults to put away their toys; modern work is “desperately serious”’ (Sennett 2008, p. 270).

Although Huizinga’s writings make note of the difficulties in *defining* play, as it evades definition as soon as it is attempted, he does outline six of its characteristics:

*We might call it a free activity [emphasis mine] standing quite consciously outside “ordinary” life as being “not serious”, but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means.*

(Huizinga 1950, p. 13)

Firstly Huizinga understands play as voluntary; when it ceases to be voluntary, it cannot be understood as play anymore. Thereby, work seems to be constructed as an opposite, because it involves some sort of coercion. Second, Huizinga highlights the fun of play; how it completely absorbs the player. He writes about the primordial quality of play: ‘Why does the baby crawl with pleasure? ... Why is a huge crowd roused to frenzy by a football match? This intensity of, and absorption in, play finds no explanation in biological analysis. Yet in this intensity, this absorption, this power of maddening, lies the very essence, the primordial quality of play’ (1950, p. 2). Apart from the problematic qualification of ‘play’ as being ‘primordial’, the description of the affective intensity of play is very interesting and relevant to this research. Third, Huizinga strongly rejects the idea that any kind of material interest can be ascribed to play. Play is thereby conceived as unproductive. In the words of Caillois, play is ‘an occasion of pure waste: waste of time, energy, ingenuity, skill, and often of money...’ (Caillois 1961, p. 5). In addition, Huizinga suggests that ‘numerous attempts to define the biological function of play’ (1950, p. 2) fail, because they assume that play serves something which is *not* play, in

something that lies before or after it. Fourth, play is bounded in both time and place. According to Huizinga, play creates a different time-space, clearly defined by either material boundaries or boundaries in the realm of ideas. Playgrounds are set apart from everyday life: ‘forbidden spots, isolated, hedged round, hallowed, within which special rules obtain. All are temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart’ (1950, p. 10). Fifth, play is governed by its own set of rules. And sixth, according to Huizinga, play promotes social groupings that surround themselves with secrecy. Thus, in Huizinga’s conception, play is voluntary, absorbing in its affective intensity, non-instrumental, bounded both in time and space, governed by its own rules and creates social processes of grouping and secrecy.

Roger Caillois (1961) was a key theorist of play who was strongly influenced by Huizinga. Caillois’ book *Man, Play, and Games* (Caillois 1961) was published in an English translation from the original French in 1961, at a rather different time to that when Huizinga’s work came out. Caillois was clearly influenced by Huizinga’s ideas, and he does not contest the conception of play and work as being separate spheres of social life. However, despite the similarities, Caillois takes a critical stance towards Huizinga’s definition of play, which is both “too broad and too narrow” (Caillois 1961, p. 4). While Caillois acknowledges the originality and power of Huizinga’s work, he criticises him for his pure focus on games that involve competition, omitting games of chance such as gambling. Moreover, according to Caillois, Huizinga: “deliberately omits, as obvious, the description and classification of games themselves, since they all respond to the same psychological attitude.” (Caillois 1961, p. 4) It is here that Caillois claims his space for explorations of the field of play, and specifically games.

Caillois introduces four ‘rubrics’ of games that help to understand the dynamics of play: competition (agôn), chance (alea), simulation (mimicry) and vertigo (illinx). These different categories each stand for a different human need which is channelled through the act of playing, or in Caillois’ words they refer to four different psychological attitudes to four human instincts which are disciplined and institutionalised by games:

*...the desire to win by one’s merit in regulated competition (agôn), the submission of one’s will in favour of anxious and passive anticipation of where the wheel will stop (alea), the desire to*

*assume a strange personality (mimicry), and, finally, the pursuit of vertigo (illinx). In agôn, the player relies only upon himself and his utmost efforts; in alea, he counts on everything except himself, submitting to the powers that elude him; in mimicry, he imagines that he is someone else, and he invents an imaginary universe; in illinx, he gratifies the desire to temporarily destroy his bodily equilibrium, escape the tyranny of his ordinary perception, and provoke the abdication of conscience. (Caillois 1961, p. 44)*

Within the game categories there is a continuum of ways of playing. This ranges from *paidia*, standing for improvisation and unstructured, ephemeral and tactile exploration, to *ludus*, which involves development of technique and skill, of institutionalisation and repetition. This continuum provides a framework for looking at playful practices. It touches upon order and disorder, on how free play can develop into institutionalised forms while still remaining free, because it ‘...turns out to be capable of producing ever new combinations’ (Caillois 1961, p. 30).

Thus, Huizinga and Caillois ascribe a diverse set of qualities to play: voluntary and absorbing (affective intensity), non-instrumental and unproductive, bounded in time and place, governed by its own rules, open to chance, and imaginative. This thinking is useful for this research, because these authors provide productive ways of identifying moments of play in social life. Therefore, Huizinga and Caillois’ conceptualisation of play guides the analysis of gardening practices in this thesis.

Both Caillois and Huizinga place a great deal of emphasis on play as standing apart from ordinary life. These authors produce distinct, autonomous, opposing categories of play and work. However, these conceptions are too simplistic and agonistic, and they limit the potential for understanding contemporary social life. Ehrman et al. rightly criticise both Huizinga and Caillois for having ‘a fundamentally rationalist view according to which human activities relate, on the one hand, to dreams, gratuitousness, nobility, imagination, etc. and on the other to consciousness, utility, instinct, reality etc.’ (1968, pp. 32–33). They go on to argue that play cannot be defined by ‘isolating it on the basis of its relationship to an *a priori* reality and culture. To define play is *at the same time* and *in the same movement* to define reality and to

define culture' (Ehrmann *et al.* 1968, p. 55). In other words, play, work, culture and ordinary life cannot be seen as separate entities; they are produced at the same time and place.

Furthermore, Huizinga conveys problematic romantic ideas about the medieval world and he is naïve in his complete neglect of how economic processes co-constitute social life. This research takes these criticisms of the works of Huizinga and Caillois seriously, but also recognises the potential of their writings for exploring the relations between play and work.

### **2.1.2 Play and Work Blurred: Post-Industrial Society**

The following discussion of literature on post-industrial society and how post-Fordist economies condition social life will suggest that the boundaries between play and work get blurred. Instead of industrial society's tendency to push 'play' to the margins and focus on rationalised work, post-Fordist economies put 'play' at the centre of 'work'. Within these new economic conditions, the figure of *Homo ludens* seems to be appropriated. Play is deployed as the driver of economic growth; the playful worker is a productive worker. Thus, the spheres of play and work diffuse, the boundaries blur.

According to authors Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a), Goggin (2011), Gielen (2013) and Gill and Pratt (2008), the shift towards post-Fordist economies means a shift towards production processes in which fun, flexibility, spontaneity, creativity and responsiveness become valued as drivers of economic growth. For instance, Goggin (2011) invokes Lazzarato's (1996) work on post-Fordist production processes and how these depend on immaterial labour and the "extraordinary extent to which" forms of playfulness such as "creativity, communication, emotion, cooperation, and values" are currently being "put to work" (Lazzarato 1996, p. 146 in Goggin 2011, p. 361). Similarly, Butler *et al.* claim (2011) that within the business world 'the idea that the playful worker is a productive worker has certainly gained currency' (Butler *et al.* 2011, p. 332). In their introduction to the special issue *Play, Work and Boredom* in *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization*, a journal of critical management studies, these authors observe that the dominant neoliberal discourse reflects the idea that 'economic success is predicated less on hard (and potentially unenjoyably) graft than it is on

modes of playful behaviour such as spontaneity, flexibility and responsiveness' (Butler *et al.* 2011, p. 332). This literature thus suggests that rather than play and work being opposite categories, they overlap or collapse into each other.

Boltanski and Chiapello (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a), for example, outline that with the emergence of the *New Spirit of Capitalism*, these Fordist categories of work and non-work have morphed into a single category of 'activities'. Critical of the new urban, economic condition in which such 'activities' overcome the binary opposition of play and work, these authors speak of social life being conceived of as a series of projects (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, p. 196). The Industrial Cité is transformed into Project-oriented Cité. This new flexibility in the labour market is evoked by Gielen: 'in the wet, flat networked world, creative individuals swim hastily and blindly from one project to the next' (Gielen 2013, p. 41). He warns that this will ultimately undermine the sustainability of creative production. In his analysis of working conditions in contemporary fine art, Gielen (2013) argues that neoliberal forces have appropriated and sped up the institutional critique made by artists in the 1960s, and have 'quickly found ways to profit from the work done by the institutional critique by taking over its jargon of "creativity" (which would squash the museum), "innovation" (which would slow the museum down) and "flexibility" (which would make the museum rigid)' (Gielen 2013, pp. 31–32), an argument inspired by Boltanski and Chiapello's work (2005b). In this respect, Gill and Pratt (2008) provide an interesting account of immaterial labour as they complicate the understanding of the precarious working conditions of cultural workers.

Informed by a different political agenda, and situated in the discipline of psychology, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) also breaks down the binary opposition between play and work, setting up in its place a distinction between flow and boredom/anxiety. Flow refers to the affective state of the enjoyment of being fully immersed in a single activity – Huizinga (1950) alludes to this affective intensity (Pfaller 2014, p. 93) when he speaks of being absorbed in play. Butler *et al.* (2011) argue that for Csikszentmihalyi, 'play and work – defined in terms of their ability to capture one's full attention – run alongside one another, no longer in hostile opposition, but now united against the forces of boredom and anxiety' (Butler *et al.* 2011, p. 332). From this



literature, a cynical image of the playful worker arises, a worker who seeks out diverse activities. Working times are extremely flexible, the nine to five ‘grind’ has been replaced by working day and night, or the whole week if needed. The ‘ideal’ working individual is creative, responsive, takes initiative and is keen to meet new people. Work should be *fun* and *immersive*. But these authors also warn that these new forms of work are precarious and foster exploitation of workers.

Building upon Boltanski & Chiapello’s (2005b) previous arguments, in his book *The labour of leisure: the culture of free-time*, Rojek (2010) introduces a new perspective on leisure with implications for the bifurcation of play and work. Rojek argues that leisure time is increasingly being used by people to enhance their credibility and respect with their peers. Free time, he argues, has become a means to obtain a personality (Blackshaw 2011), although he claims that it does not enrich personality as such, but merely functions as a way of gaining recognition from employers, friends and the people one lives with. Leisure activities serve the purpose of enhancing ‘emotional intelligence and emotional labour capacities’ (Rojek 2010, p. 188). To summarise, Rojek views every aspect of social life as being intensely entangled with capitalism. Leisure time is reduced to a *means* to *work* on one’s public identity, on one’s people skills, on extending and sustaining one’s diverse network of friends and acquaintances, all in order to increase the likelihood of being ‘hired’ for the next project. In Rojek’s conception, leisure functions purely to boost one’s *potential* for future employers. He envisions social life as being perpetually about enhancing one’s competence, relevance and credibility, and therefore concludes that only ‘birds’ can enjoy freedom (Rojek 2010, p. 189). In other words, Rojek argues that ‘play’ is turned into an instrumental sphere for enhancing one’s potential in a capitalist world. He critically observes that people need to *work* their *play-time*. Like the authors mentioned earlier in this section, Rojek argues that play in the modernist understanding of Huizinga and Caillois has disappeared.

Both the playful worker and those who work in their play-time point towards the blurred boundaries between play and work. This raises important questions for this thesis, which I will discuss further in the next section.

### 2.1.3 Bringing *Homo ludens* to the urban garden

The literature discussed in the previous section suggests that within post-industrial society the boundaries between play and work are becoming increasingly blurred, and the relations between them more complex. This contrasts with Huizinga and Caillois' conceptions of play and work as being opposite, separate spheres. Rather than play and work being separated by clear cut boundaries, the figure of the playful worker and the practice of working one's play-time suggest that these categories collide. Boltanski and Chiapello (2005b), Rojek (2010) and Gielen (2013) all suggest that play has been appropriated by the political ideology of neoliberalism. Post-Fordist economies deploy a discourse that promises economic growth when one is flexible, creative, fun and responsive. These terms are all closely related to the modernistic notion of play rather than work. Connor (2005) expresses his concerns about how play has become the very motor of the system; so much so that it is hard to distinguish between play and work. He poses the question of what happens when: 'every instance of play deepens the reach of organised complexity, simultaneously loosening and consolidating, when the place of play is no longer self-evident, the effects of play are themselves put into play.' (Connor 2005, p. 11) This reading raises the important question of whether play has been appropriated, and has thereby disappeared from social life.

However, both Rojek (2010) and Chiapello & Boltanski (2005a) have made a structural analysis of contemporary society which does not fully consider the wide range of everyday practices and their implications. For instance, Chiapello and Boltanski's (2005b) study is based on critical discourse analysis of management books. It provides very valuable insights into current economic conditions, but does not account for the embodied practices of the workplace. Moreover, the studies discussed above cover only business cultures, the organisation of work places and macro analysis of leisure activities, which leaves open the potential for finding other manifestations of work-play relations when one studies other spheres of social life. It is these other complex relations between play and work that I will explore in this thesis through the study of urban gardening practices. For this exploration, I revisit the writings of play theorists Huizinga (1950) and Caillois (1961). The conception of *Homo ludens* forms a 'point of

departure' (Revill 2016) for understanding urban gardening practices. Furthermore, cultural geography's literature on gardening provides ways of analysing the complexities of everyday practices, which I will discuss next.

## *2.2 Discussing Cultural Geographies of Urban Gardening*

In this section, I argue that urban gardens have the potential to shed new light on the relations between play and work. Furthermore, I examine how far the cultural geography literature on urban gardening has explored this blurred notion of play and work. First, then, I discuss the ways in which cultural geographers have understood urban gardening. Following this, I bring together a specific set of authors who theorise the garden as a paradoxical space, rich in ambiguities. This section will help to further specify how this thesis extends cultural geography's thinking on gardening by bringing *Homo ludens* into the debate. I will argue that a careful study of how play and work are enacted by urban gardeners can contribute to the cultural geography literature on gardening, as well as speak back to the debates in sociology and political economy on the appropriation of play in post-Fordist societies.

### **2.2.1 Gardens: fertile ground for exploring play and work**

Gardens offer a relevant and rich case study to discuss the relations between play and work.

On the one hand, gardens were often understood historically as secluded spaces of pleasure and leisure, depicted as spaces of escape from a stressful and draining urban life. One can think of representations of the garden as a peaceful, cultivated, enclosed space (Tuan 1974, p. 145, Turner 2005, p. 1), often portrayed as a paradise on earth in which humans and nature exist in harmony (Olwig 2002, p. 131). Other examples are the *pleasure gardens* in Georgian England, offering carnivalesque entertainment for the middle-classes in a green environment (Porter and Roberts 1996, pp. 27–28, Brown 1999, p. 41) or the 19<sup>th</sup> century guinea gardens, which pre-empted allotment sites and were used by the lower-middle classes to spend their leisure time cultivating a small piece of land or just being idle in their rented green space. In contrast to allotments, families were allowed to spend the night at the Guinea gardens, and as

such they functioned as leisure spaces for a whole weekend (Gaskell 1980, McKay 2011). Thus, gardens have tended to be understood as spaces of escape, of peacefulness, as sites of leisure. Recent research by Bhatti and Church on domestic gardening also suggests the joy that gardeners derive from sensual and personal readings of nature. These authors have identified how the garden industry shapes a shift from ‘cultivation-based’ to ‘home-based leisure use’ of domestic gardens. Yet, Bhatti and Church complicate this narrative by showing how some domestic gardeners enjoy their garden work and develop personal readings of nature.

In contrast, gardens have also been discussed by several authors as being bound up with paid work and the machinations of capitalist societies (Hoyles 1991, McKay 2011). Raymond Williams (1973, p. 124) argues that English landscape gardens are landscapes of visual consumption which purposefully hide clues about the work that has been put into their creation. He argues that these gardens are the result of the exploitation of workers extending beyond the boundaries of the gardens into the controlled farming lands. Allotment gardens are another evocative example. Allotment plots were introduced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a form of compensation for the loss of land suffered as a consequence of the enclosure of land. The size of plots was legally limited to not much larger than that required to provide the worker with enough space to feed his family. The reasoning was that larger pieces of land would exhaust workers, which would have a detrimental effect on their capacity to work in the factories of the industrialists (Hoyles 1991, p. 271). Most of today’s allotment sites derive from the paternalistic project of the rich industrialists to keep workers away from criminality and the pub and offer a healthy activity for their ‘free’ time. More recent studies have shown that gardening is an enjoyable practice because it offers a contrast to paid work (Schoneboom and May 2013). Unemployed allotment holders in Newcastle, for instance, lost interest in their plots, as gardening was something they did *after* their paid work (Crouch and Ward 1997, p. 109). Summing up, this literature suggests that garden spaces are produced in relation to the spheres of work, revealing how gardens are bound up with capitalism.

Thus, historians and cultural geographers have argued that gardens are both part of capitalism (industrial and post-industrial), but also retain the potential for ludic play. Hence,

Huizinga and Caillois remain useful as points of departure for exploring the complex relations between play and work as enacted in gardens.

### **2.2.2 Investigating allotment, community and guerrilla gardening**

This section discusses how cultural geographers have understood allotment, community and guerrilla gardening. Here, I define the differences between these three gardening practices in terms of their different relations to space. Allotment gardeners rent their own individual plot, community gardeners share a garden space with each other and guerrilla gardeners informally claim spaces in the city. All three urban gardening practices have a certain publicness to them, offering the potential for encounters between strangers.

First, allotments have been discussed in terms of their health benefits (Parr 2007, Ferres and Townshend 2012), as contributing to food securities (Barthel *et al.* 2013), as sites for voluntary food production and consumption (Jehlicka and Smith 2012, Wiltshire and Geoghegan 2012) and as cultural artefacts (King 2007). Furthermore, Tilley (2008) has related these landscapes with the reproduction of banal nationalities, which he argues on the basis of a comparative study of the material cultures of English and Swedish allotments. However, *The Allotment – Its Landscape and Culture* by Colin Ward and David Crouch (1997) remains a key publication; it is a rich account of the history and geography of British allotments—the most comprehensive overview of UK allotment gardening within cultural geography to date. David Crouch has substantially developed his thinking about landscape, time, space and performativity through the study of allotments and gardening (see Crouch 2001, 2003a, 2003b, 2010a, 2010b, Crouch and Parker 2003). In addition, cultural geographer Caitlin DeSilvey (DeSilvey 2003) discusses how the landscapes of allotments are continuously under construction and how they occupy an interstitial marginal position within the city. Like DeSilvey (2003), there are several other feminist scholars who have recently engaged with allotment gardening. For instance, Susan Buckingham's (2005) paper considers the increased number of women who are entering into allotment gardening. She discusses the implications for gender roles, on and off the plot, of the transformation of a traditionally (retired) male space, making it more socially diverse

(Buckingham 2005). Another example is a study of a group of young lesbian and bisexual women tending an allotment plot, and how intimate 'privatepublics' are produced through their practice (Moore *et al.* 2014).

Second, recent studies of community gardens often discuss their contribution to sustainability, health and inclusion for urban dwellers (Turner *et al.* 2011). Other studies analyse the political potential for social and spatial transformation of cities and societies (Eizenberg 2013, Nettle 2014). In contrast, Rosol unpacks how neo-liberal subjects are constituted in gardens (Rosol 2010, 2012, Rosol and Schweizer 2012), while Crossan *et al.* critically addresses this analysis of the production of neoliberal urbanism, arguing instead that community gardens can be spaces for DIY citizenship (Crossan *et al.* 2016). Other scholars have written about how community gardens can cultivate citizen-subjects (see Pudup 2008). The scope of the literature on community gardens shows that the social and spatial meanings of these sites are very contested, and that 'community gardening' is quite an elusive term.

Lastly, as guerrilla gardening is a more recent phenomenon, literature on this practice is scarce in comparison to that on allotment and community gardening. In a recent ethnographic account by Hardman and Larkham, *guerrilla gardening* is framed as 'informal urban agriculture' (Hardman and Larkham 2014). Hardman has also published with Adams on forms of resistance in guerrilla gardening (Adams and Hardman 2013). An early study of guerrilla gardening in London by Zanetti (2007) discussed the operations of guerrilla gardeners based in South London. Thompson (2015) offers a different perspective on guerrilla gardening, analysing the role of guerrilla gardening within a community development project undertaken by the architecture studio *Assemble*. He discusses how grassroots experimentation plays a role in the complex process of urban regeneration (Thompson 2015). Others understand guerrilla gardening as 'sustainability in action' (Crane *et al.* 2013), highlighting its radical potential (Hunt 2013), or bring it into relation with utopian thinking (Atkinson 2007). A different approach is taken by Melanie Walton, whose phenomenological account of guerrilla gardening analyses encounters with flowers amidst the concrete (Walton 2011). There is also a very well researched account of *tree pit* gardening in France, although this is not framed as guerrilla

gardening by its authors, Pellegrini and Baudry (2014). This paper sets out how legal structures and urban planning policies shape green spaces, and how bottom up initiatives for tree pit planting contest these governmental practices. They highlight the agency of plant varieties and discuss the effects on biodiversity (Pellegrini and Baudry 2014).

Based on this initial discussion of the cultural geography literature on allotment, community, and guerrilla gardening, I suggest that this thesis will go beyond interpretations of urban gardening as a means of improving health, ensuring food security and contributing to a sustainable future. Rather, I will articulate how in these spaces the relations between play and work are enacted in the embodied practices of urban gardeners. I aim to discuss the messiness of this field of doings and engage with the feelings and affects produced whilst gardening in the city. In the following section I discuss literature that understands the garden as a messy place, complex and full of contradictions.

### **2.2.3 Ambiguities in the Garden: practiced, embodied landscapes**

As I suggested in Section 2.2.1, gardens are often portrayed as peaceful green spaces of escape from the spheres of work and the bustling city. In contrast, the cultural geography literature discussed in this section explores alternative understandings of gardens as complex contradictory spaces, ambiguous and always in the process of being made. Thereby, it starts to challenge Huizinga and Caillois' notion of play and work as separate spheres, bounded in time and place.

The following discussion will suggest that gardens are always in the process of being made. Hinchcliffe's critical reading of Raymond Williams' (1973) understanding of landscapes offers a point of departure for the discussion:

*Landscapes are, then, emotional and passionate matters, made up of practices that are just as embodied for the observer as they are for Williams' romanticized workers. Rather than Williams' insiders and outsiders, we are all landscapers now (although the power to landscape and the powers of landscape remain uneven). (Hinchcliffe 2002, p. 213)*

Hinchliffe addresses the sharp distinction that modernist scholarship draws between the observer and the world. He argues that landscapes are embodied matters, practiced by both observer and worker. But there are still uneven power relations at play. Hinchliffe (2002) contributes to a debate that reconsiders the work of cultural geographers like Cosgrove and Daniels, who have interpreted landscapes as cultural representations and so have ‘fixed and framed’ the lively landscapes they were studying (Lorimer 2005, p. 84). These debates have re-envisioned the landscapes of gardens as ‘created by actions and processes, rather than the place portrayed by the end product’ (Lorimer 2005, p. 85). Several geographers have envisioned gardens as practiced, embodied spaces. For instance, Hitchings’ (2010) study of back gardens, or Degen et al.’s (2010) study of passionate involvement with urban nature: ‘this is a landscape that is not gazed upon but lived in through the senses’ (Degen *et al.* 2010, p. 71). Thinking through allotment landscapes, Crouch (2001, 2003a) discusses the creativity and textures of the doings of landscapes.

These studies are informed by a particular understanding of social life as being enacted through practices. Rather than a single authored, stable, homogenous theorisation, *Practice Theory* is conceived by Reckwitz as forming a ‘family of theories’ (Reckwitz 2002, p. 244). This ‘family’ shares conceptions of social life, but cannot be considered to have a stable identity. For this research, I build upon Reckwitz’s ‘idealised’ synthesis of cultural theories of social practices derived from the works of Bourdieu, Giddens, late Foucault, Garfinkel, Latour and Taylor. Reckwitz discusses these authors and their understandings of social life and argues that together they offer a different conception of social life to that offered by other versions of cultural theory (mentalism, textualism and intersubjectivism respectively). Reckwitz’s discussion of practice theory envisions a social order as being ‘embedded in collective cognitive and symbolic structures, in a “shared knowledge” which enables a socially shared way of ascribing meaning to the world’ (Reckwitz 2002, p. 246). Reckwitz defines practice as follows:

*A “practice” (Praktik) is a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, “things” and*



*their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge.* (2002, p. 249)

This particular understanding of how social life is structured thus emphasises the interconnectedness of mental and bodily activities, the agencies of objects, formations of shared technical and emotional knowledges. In other words, this strand of thought urges sensitivity to how social life comes into being rather than utilising prefigured or fixed understandings of this process. It aims to study the complex relations enacted between humans, nonhumans and ‘stuff’—thus directing attention towards the *doings* of everyday life.

This ‘practice’ thinking has had an impact on cultural geographers’ studies of urban gardens. For example, Bhatti et al. present a critique of ‘familiar cultural narratives of ‘the garden’ in history, fiction, popular gardening media and industries’ (Bhatti *et al.* 2013, p. 51), which they base on accounts taken from the Mass Observation Archive. Their analysis of gardeners’ diary entries leads them to conclude that domestic gardens can be best understood as ‘a complex landscape, vernacular both in its making and its writing; a special yet very ordinary landscape’ (Bhatti *et al.* 2013, p. 51). Thus, these authors put emphasis on the making of the vernacular complex landscape of the domestic garden. Likewise, Hitchings (2010) understands the domestic gardens he studies as being *practiced* spaces, products of ‘determined interaction’ between gardeners and plants. He discusses the kinds of ‘techniques’ gardeners deploy to bring about the garden designs that they envision: ‘Whilst the garden was conceived as an aesthetic object, this in no way negated the actual physical labour involved in its creation. Regular monitoring of what was happening in the garden and what “needed to be done”, was commonplace. This was almost a pleasurable activity in itself: it was part of creating the garden “design”’ (Hitchings 2010, pp. 130–104). Here Hitchings (2010) highlights the physical labour put into making the garden space, and how this practice of monitoring and doing small jobs is enjoyed as an end in itself by gardeners. At the same time, he observes that the ‘perfection of this design’ obscures the physical work invested in the garden. This thesis takes inspiration from exactly this type of careful analysis undertaken by both Bhatti et al. and Hitchings, and it

will further extend the literature that attempts to specify the complex interactions that take place between humans, nonhumans and things whilst people garden.

Thus, gardens are always in the process of being made, practiced and embodied. However, I have not yet discussed how gardens are constitutive of the ambiguous relations between play and work, nature and culture, private and public. Longhurst (2006) offers this kind of more complex, ambiguous understanding of gardens. In her study of domestic gardens in Aotearoa, New Zealand, she argues that dichotomies collapse in garden spaces, working with the concept 'paradoxical space' (Rose 1993) to illuminate how domestic gardens are productive of multiple and contradictory identities. Longhurst discusses several binaries in relation to gardens, finding that these binaries become destabilised: nature and culture, private and public (see also Moore *et al.* 2014 on privatepublics), individuality and sociality, colonial and postcolonial and, most relevant to this research, leisure and work. On the latter, she comments that when one studies the practices in gardens, the boundaries continually shift:

*Strolling around the garden in the morning or evening to take in the pleasures of the sights, smells, touch and tastes of the garden ... is often punctuated by a desire or need to pull out an offending weed or prune a rose or two. Not surprisingly, home gardening is often represented as a 'labour of love. (Longhurst 2006, p. 587)*

She claims that the garden is a site where leisure and work merge (see also Bhatti *et al.* 2009). This sits within her broader discussion of the domestic garden as a paradoxical space, because gardens reflect and reinforce emancipatory and oppressive power relations, and

*can offer people psychological benefits, a pleasant space in which to work, play or relax, a retreat from the hurly-burly of city life, a focus for creative energies and a site where people can gain knowledge about nature. At the same time gardens can be sites of conflict and violence. Gardening can be a highly exclusionary practice. Only those with sufficient cultural capital and money to spend can keep up with the latest trends (Longhurst 2006, p. 590).*

Thus, according to Longhurst, domestic garden spaces are productive of both psychological benefits and conflict and violence. Moreover, she draws attention to how gardens and their cultivations also exclude people.

The ambiguous nature of domestic gardens is also pointed out by Bhatti & Church (2001), who argue that while gardens ‘may be imbued with meanings associated with spatial order, leisure and status’, they are also places ‘where individuals can develop complex, sensual and personalised readings of nature’ (Bhatti and Church 2001, p. 380). In an insightful discussion, they first note that for some people private gardens have become ‘things to be looked at, used and enjoyed, rather than to be actually worked in’ (Bhatti and Church 2001, p. 371). They observe the increased attention paid to experiencing the garden visually, which resonates with the current emphasis on the ‘visual’ in other leisure practices. These authors detect a shift from ‘cultivation-based gardening to home-based leisure use’ (Bhatti and Church 2001, p. 372). They show that people have a desire to keep the effort and time spent on maintenance to a minimum (MINTEL 1999), yet they juxtapose this analysis of the garden leisure industry with a rich account of gardeners’ cultivation of private gardens. They find that gardeners make highly personalised and sensory readings of nature in gardens and perform real and imagined interaction with other individuals. Their practices also display complex interactions with childhood memories. Furthermore, the authors’ analysis shows that the practices individuals use to create spatial ordering in their gardens are informed by a desire for privacy.

Another study that discusses the ambiguities enacted in the garden is Crouch & Ward’s (1997) account of allotments. These authors understand allotment gardens as ‘peopled landscapes’, highlighting that these landscapes are *worked* upon, cultivated by ordinary people. They argue that allotments ‘fall between being public and private landscape in a way that few others do. Its visibility is accompanied by the fact that it is not used or presented for display’ (Crouch and Ward 1997, p. 209). Crouch develops these thoughts further, saying: ‘allotments defy ideas of what is city and what is country in a way that contradicts the compartmentalisation of everyday life. The environment is continually remade, in imagination as well as on the ground’ (Crouch 2003b, p. 38). DeSilvey (2003) extends Crouch & Ward’s (1997) understanding of allotments as contesting the categories of public and private, work and leisure, city and country. In her study, DeSilvey (2003, p. 462) shows that allotment landscapes

continuously ‘undergo a process of construction and reconstruction’, in which private practices ‘bleed into the social, political and ecological contexts which frame them’. DeSilvey adopts the concepts of ‘tactics’ and ‘strategies’ from de Certeau (1984), but she locates her analysis ‘in the gap between these categories’. Her juxtaposition of archival research and ethnographic fieldwork at a Scottish allotment leads her to the following conclusions, which resonate very much with Longhurst’s (2006) argument:

*... the sedimented history of Edinburgh’s allotment movement, expressed on the ground in the messy coexistence of different plotting practices, might actually contribute to the vulnerability and marginalization of these landscapes. Because allotments fail to conform to conventional discourses of municipal recreation and leisure, they often occupy an interstitial space where no one will claim full responsibility for them. Allotments can be thought of as ‘third spaces’, where static dichotomies – private and public, production and consumption, labour and leisure – break down into tangled contingencies. (DeSilvey 2003, p. 444)*

DeSilvey thus conceives of allotments as ‘third spaces’ in which dichotomies are broken down and interrelations become more complex. Her comment on the categories of labour and leisure breaking down into tangled contingencies is especially relevant for this research, suggesting that in the garden play and work become entangled. Furthermore, DeSilvey’s claim that the very messiness of allotments contributes to their vulnerability and marginalisation is important for this research, because it might suggest that community gardeners and guerrilla gardens find themselves in even more vulnerable positions. In contrast to allotment holders, they lack any legal framework to protect their activities.

Schoneboom and May (2013) further explore this notion of the entangled contingencies of paid work and allotment practices. These authors discuss the complementary and contradictory relations between the allotment and Western capitalist societies, evoking the multiple and diverse relations between the paid work done by allotment holders in Newcastle and their gardening practices. They found that:

*...the allure of allotments is **bound up** [emphasis mine] with the exhilarating and demanding urban work patterns and lifestyles they complement. Today’s allotments are **neither a form of***

*pure rebellion nor a harmonious antidote to work-related stress but a many-layered and contradictory discourse on wage labour and its alternatives. These portraits are a celebration of the creative freedom, ingenuity and self-reliance that thrives alongside our careers but they also reflect tension and possibility as we negotiate how best – in a society capable of co-opting all our emotional and physical resources – to spend our time.* (Schoneboom and May 2013, p. 148)

Schoneboom and May's analysis thus advocates a nuanced understanding of allotment gardening practices and how these relate to paid work. They speak of a many-layered contradictory discourse on wage labour and its alternatives. Hence, their research draws attention to the tension between the creative freedom of gardening and a society that is capable of co-opting all emotional and physical resources.

As shown in the above discussion, cultural geographers such as Crouch (1997, 2003b), Hitchings (2010), Longhurst (2006), DeSilvey (2003) and Bhatti and Church (2001) explore more complicated understandings of gardens. They argue that the binaries of nature and culture, work and leisure, private and public break down in gardens into entangled contingencies, or they suggest that contradictory notions co-exist. They show that gardens can be understood as practiced, embodied landscapes (Hinchliffe 2002, Reckwitz 2002, Lorimer 2005). For example, Longhurst (2006) suggests that gardens reflect and reinforce both emancipatory and oppressive power relations, while Schoneboom and May (2013) argue that the researcher should show sensitivity to everyday negotiations around how to spend one's time in relation to play, work and gardening. Thus, this specific literature presents feminist critiques of binary understandings of nature and culture and leisure and work. Furthermore, it advocates a sensitivity towards the *doings* of gardening, the personal readings of nature versus the mechanisms of garden industries and the contradictory power relations enacted in the garden. This thesis will build upon and extend these particular conceptions of gardens as spaces of ambiguities, as embodied practiced landscapes. Although these authors offer a critical framework for understanding urban garden practices, they do not discuss the garden in depth as a space for both play and work. The particular lens of this research, the enactment of paradoxical spaces of play and work, will address these gaps in the cultural geography literature.

#### **2.2.4 More-than-human Geographies: Gardening, Enchantments and Creativities**

Recent studies in cultural geography offer a more complex understanding of the distinctions and agencies of humans and nonhumans, an understanding which sheds new light on the process of urban gardening. Instead of depicting garden work as an exercise of control by human beings over nature, this literature suggests a more complex pattern of relations between humans and nonhumans. In this section, I discuss this more-than-human-geography literature, and specifically research that brings to the fore the ‘enchantments’ and ‘creativities’ of doing gardening. These two terms relate to the main concern of this thesis: the relations between play and work as enacted in the garden. Cultural geographers have written about gardening in terms of ‘enchantment’ and being ‘creative’, which opens up possibilities for exploring Huizinga’s claim that play is both voluntary and captivating as well as being unproductive.

Sociality has traditionally been understood as interactions among humans, yet an on-going debate within academia extends the social beyond the human. Some examples of this are: encountering ‘wild’ nature (Lorimer and Lorimer 2015, Clark 2016, Loftus 2016), posthuman geographies (Castree and Nash 2006), gardens and contested boundaries of nature and culture (Head and Muir 2006), the notion of the post-social and the city (Amin and Thrift 2002, Cetina and Bruegger 2004, Latour 2005), hybrid geographies (Whatmore, 2002), living cities and cohabitation (Head and Muir 2006, Hinchliffe and Whatmore 2006) and economic ethics for the anthropocene (Graham and Roelvink 2010). These authors contest the traditional divisions between nature and culture, attempting instead to understand the inhabitations of the world as ‘naturecultures’ or hybrid geographies, the differences being relational rather than static. Moreover, they destabilise conceptions of the power of human agency, and suggest the ‘social’ be understood as enacted by a multiplicity of actors—humans, nonhumans and objects. This is a distributed, relational, performative understanding of how the world is always in the process of being made. This work is informed by the thinking of Haraway (2000, 2008), Latour (2005), Law (2004) and Strathern (1992), amongst many other authors.

This relational thinking is woven into Haraway's (2008) *When Species Meet*, which evokes her complex, affective interactions with her dog. She proposes that these encounters be understood as taking place in situated naturecultures:

*Or maybe it is just my monomania to place baboons and humans together in situated histories, situated naturecultures, in **which all the actors become who they are in the dance of relating**, [emphasis mine] not from scratch, not ex nihilo, but full of the **patterns of their sometimes-joined, sometimes-separate heritages both before and lateral to this encounter**. All the dancers are redone through the patterns they enact. The temporalities of companion species comprehend all the possibilities activated **in becoming with**, including the heterogeneous scales of evolutionary time for everybody but also the many other rhythms of conjoined process.*

(Haraway 2008, p. 25)

This understanding of naturecultures, in which all actors become who they are in the dance of relating, presents the challenge of doing geography *differently*—conducting research that works *with* these more-than-human agencies, that performs a sensitivity towards these other forces at play (Dowling *et al.* 2016, p. 2).

Gardens are productive sites for exploring more-than-human agencies and doing geography differently, as the following studies exemplify. For instance, Haraway's naturecultures have been explored in relation to a workgroup of young lesbian and bisexual women tending an allotment plot in Manchester (Moore *et al.* 2014). These authors argue that the experience of the allotment allows a 'recentring', a different world of intimate privatepublics is enacted through garden work. Another study highlights the agency of grape plants within the process of producing wine, showing how their temporalities impact on the affective experience of agricultural work (Brice 2014). Brice understands 'crops as active mediators of social life' (Brice 2014, p. 20). In his study of private gardeners, Ginn (2014) argues that more-than-human geographies have tended to focus on how things get entangled and have thereby neglected to study the acts of detachment that take place in this complex web of agents. Ginn carefully describes how 'slugs and gardeners are "sticky": joined together by shared histories, curiosity and disgust'. Following on, he examines how 'gardeners practice

detachment: distancing themselves from the act of killing slugs but yet avowing the violence of their actions; acknowledging the limits of their capacities to bend space to their will and imagination; recognising the vulnerability of slugs, and being transformed by that recognition' (Ginn 2014, p. 1). This account calls for attention to both the making and unmaking of relations between plants, animals and people in gardens and exploration of the constitutive potential of these patterns of encounters between species.

Building on the literature on more-than-human agencies discussed above, some cultural geographers have analysed moments of enchantment glimpsed in the dance of relating in the garden. For instance, Bhatti et al. (2009) discuss enchanting encounters in domestic gardens, revealing the prosaic pleasures of working and being in the garden. They argue both that the garden is 'an everyday workplace of bodily pleasures' and that their respondents enjoyed *just* being in the garden, without a specific purpose or activity, which resonates very much with notions of play. Their account of 'pottering about' evokes the blurred boundaries between play and work:

*Many respondents reported that they enjoyed simply 'pottering about', which meant doing odd jobs in an unplanned random manner mainly for the pleasures and joys of nature, of the body inhabiting the garden. Through this pottering they also experienced reverie; a certain kind of space that is neither here nor there, but in-between, a mode of 'being' always in sensual emotion, a 'reverberation' in Bachelard's phenomenology. (Bhatti et al. 2009, p. 73)*

These authors describe a state of daydreaming, of being neither here nor there, related to the sensual emotion. It resonates with losing oneself in an activity, with feeling absorbed, with the idea of play having no purpose beyond the activity itself. Moreover, the notion of doing jobs in the garden in an 'unplanned manner' is interesting for the exploration of play and work in this thesis, because it signifies a certain openness that is less rational and task oriented than paid work.

Ginn (2017) further develops the thoughts of Bhatti et al. (2009) on enchantment in domestic gardens by introducing the 'event of colour'. He argues that this enchantment goes beyond the 'objective interaction of light and surface, and encompasses the anticipation of



colour to come and the memory of colour faded from the world' (Ginn 2017, p. 112). Ginn thus emphasises the temporality of the garden and its colours that can be explored through the senses but also evoked by memories and anticipation. He continues by saying that colour enchantments 'emerge from the trained senses, from the capacities of the plant for flowering and from the environmental forces the plant draws on to flourish' (Ginn 2017, p. 112). He thereby describes how the complex web of entanglements between humans and nonhumans in the garden can constitute enchantments of colour.

This relational understanding between humans and more-than-human actors is also explored by Degen et al.'s (2010) study of passionate involvements with nature. Looking at both nonhuman and human inhabitation of an allotment site and an informal park, these authors' account talks about the 'fleshiness of emotional involvements with the environment' (Degen *et al.* 2010, p. 78), for instance picking out the process of rubbing the soil between one's fingers to assess the qualities of the material. This study focuses on the *doing and sensing* of cultivating urban natures, arguing that 'routine corporeal engagements help gardeners to learn to be affected' (Degen *et al.* 2010, p. 71). The authors thus understand cultivation work as embodied, constitutive of passions and distributed among humans, nonhumans and the environment.

Hence, Degen et al. (2010), Ginn (2017) and Bhatti et al. (2009) each articulate enchanted encounters whilst people garden, opening up the possibility of further exploration of this moment of embodied captivation in urban gardening practices—one of key elements of play as envisioned by Huizinga (1950). Most importantly, Bennett asserts that enchantments are bodily effects, speaking of being struck and shaken, caught up and carried away. Bennett's (2001) definition of enchantment resonates with play as absorbing the player:

*...enchantment is something that we encounter, that hits us . . . to be enchanted is to be struck and shaken by the extraordinary that lives amid the familiar and the everyday . . . to be simultaneously transfixed in wonder and transported by sense, to be caught up and carried away—enchantment is marked by this odd combination of somatic effects. (In Holloway 2006, p. 186)*

As discussed in Section 2.1.1., Huizinga states that all play is voluntary, it is a free activity. Yet, he also understands play as being *fun* and as fully captivating the player: ‘play casts a spell over us; it is enchanting, captivating’ (Huizinga 1950, pp. 9–10). These two statements seem to contradict each other, and as Pfaller comments, in Huizinga’s writing, ‘play has an inherent tendency to slip from the participants’ power’ (Pfaller 2014, p. 86). Similarly, Frissen et al. observe this tension in Huizinga’s theorisation of play: it is both ‘freedom and force...a celebration of human freedom...and it demands our complete maddening absorption’ (Frissen *et al.* 2015, p. 16). Huizinga’s theorisation of play thus holds within it a contradiction that challenges human agency: is the player captive or free?

Pfaller (2014) notes that in Huizinga’s writing this moment of enchantment, of affective intensity, depends on the intellectual:

*...we will be absorbed by the illusion of play only if and when we see through it. Knowledge does not help us gain emotional distance – on the contrary: our intellectual distancing from play pushes us into the throes of the affective capacity of play. In order to break the spell of play, we must therefore try to forget that it is just play.* (Pfaller 2014, p. 93)

Thus, according to Huizinga the affective intensity of play depends on intellectual acknowledgement that it is ‘just play’. To bring it back to cultural geography, Degen et al. (2010), as mentioned earlier, argue that gardeners learn to be affected through their routine corporeal engagements with nature. As the above discussion of literature on enchantment in more-than-human engagements with naturecultures has shown, there is an opening for further exploration of the contradictory conception of play as both voluntary *and at the same time* enchanting and captivating. Gardening as a practice offers the opportunity to challenge human agency and instead attune to the dance of relating with the more-than-human.

More-than-human geography literature discusses the creative practices of gardening in ways that resonate strongly with a critical interrogation of Huizinga and Caillois’ conception of play as unproductive. Crouch (2003a, p. 3) is concerned with what he calls ‘tangles in the mundane’ in the context of the improvisations and unexpected encounters involved in *doing* gardening. Firstly, he (Crouch 2003a, p. 1955, 2010a) depicts allotment gardening as a ‘creative

act' constitutive of a temporary world, signifying a disruption of the everyday. Crouch sheds light on the cultivation of an allotment plot over a period of years, showing how gardeners go through 'a process of trying out, adjusting, improvisation and coming across new ways of doing things in hybrid combination that also reveal things new about themselves' (Crouch 2010a, p. 138). In his analysis, rather than seeing in gardeners' accounts merely the outcome of the simple tasks they undertake in the garden, Crouch recognises the 'transformative possibility' of embodied doings and feelings: 'the creativity is not so much in the patterns on the ground but in what those patterns signify: changing relationships, feelings, ways of being and becoming' (Crouch 2010a, p. 137). Crouch frames gardening as a creative practice that is not concerned by its final outcomes, but rather emphasises the process of doing gardening.

In a similar vein, Ginn (2017) discusses the improvisations and creativity of gardening, understanding the practice of suburban gardeners as existing in a state of 'certain uncertainty'. He observes that gardeners' practices are informed by an approach of 'alterity-in-relation', as they acknowledge the limits of their capacity to know what is going to happen with their plants; it is beyond the gardener to control all the forces at play. Ginn argues that without the sometimes unsettling unpredictability of plants, there would be no enchantment, no 'risk in the cutting into life flows' (Ginn 2017, p. 218). This makes the practice enjoyable and pleasing. The alterity-in-relation has consequences for gardeners' understanding of temporalities. As Ginn says, 'We have grown too used to seeing the present as solid, there in front of us, and the future as uncertain, unknown and alien terrain, something to be controlled. Rather than seek to control the future of their gardens and their plants, the suburban gardener cares for the future and coaxes it into being' (Ginn 2017, p. 218). Here, the creativity of gardening is thus situated in the unpredictable interactions between the gardener, the plants and the other environmental forces at play.

Hitchings (2010) gives another example of the creativity involved in human-plant interactions. He describes the *fun* that one gardener derives from having the aesthetically attractive *Hosta fortunei* plant in her garden, to the degree that she is willing to put up with a daily routine of removing slugs and snails, as this particular plant is also very attractive for

these small creatures. The capacities of the *Hosta fortunei* plant thus move the garden aesthetically, and therefore also physically, demanding the hard work of picking off slugs and snails each morning. This exemplifies the interconnectedness of forms of work and play in the garden.

These three authors all allude to the creativities produced in gardening practices, analysing both routine and improvised ways in which humans and more-than-human actors relate. This discussion can inform the exploration of how notions of play and work are enacted in the garden. Specifically, in Huizinga and Caillois' understanding, play is unproductive and the player is disinterested in outcomes, 'the enjoyment comes from the practice' (Rojek 1995, p. 185). Crouch (2003a, 2010a), Hitchings (2010), and Ginn (2017) both challenge and support the idea of gardening as play and therefore as being unproductive. They show that gardening can be understood as a creative act which is productive of a temporary world, it can coax the future, bring the pleasure of seeing the *Hosta fortunei* grow. Yet, these authors also emphasise the enjoyment, the feeling, of just doing the gardening, the embodied engagement with other more-than-human actors, altering in relation, being less concerned with its outcomes. This thesis will build upon this discussion and further explore this field of tension between unproductive play and creative garden acts. Caillois' (1961) continuum of play, with *paidia* or free flowing association at one extreme and *ludus* or repeated skills at the other might help to understand the slippages between improvisations and routinised practices.

### **2.2.5 Urban Encounters: Public Gardens, Thrown-togetherness & Playfulness**

This research focuses on gardening at public sites in cities, so in this section I examine debates on urban encounters in cultural geography. Unlike private gardens, allotments, community gardens and guerrilla gardening sites are accessible to the public, so it is more likely that gardeners on such sites will share the space with others, both people they are familiar with and strangers. This fact might change the nature of negotiation between humans and nonhumans. Therefore, below I discuss literature on the urban condition of being thrown together in the here and now of the city and writings which deal with how difference is re-constituted in encounters.

This section also brings together thinking on socialities that inspires exploration of the playfulness of negotiating social relations in public gardens. This understanding of encounters includes interactions between humans and nonhumans, as discussed in Section 2.2.4.

In the discipline of cultural geography, there is a wide and lively debate on ‘living with difference’ in cities. Cities are places of density and diversity, and Massey’s work (1991, 2005) has been influential in cultural geography’s understanding of how urban spaces are constituted. Massey challenges fixed, homogeneous, de-politicised theorisations of space and place, speaking of the ‘throwntogetherness’ of place, which presents ‘...the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now (itself drawing on a history and geography of thens and theres); and a negotiation which must take place within and between both human and nonhuman’ (Massey 2005). She brings this challenge of negotiating a here-and-now to the debate on public spaces. Massey contests the tendency to portray public spaces as empty slates which enable free speech, and instead argues for a theory of ‘space and place as the product of social relations which are most likely conflicting and unequal’ (Massey 2005). Thus, the urban condition produces a specific multiplicity and diversity of interactions. Rather than a fixed, homogeneous conception of urban spaces, Massey argues for an understanding of public spaces as heterogeneous, continuously re-shaped in the process of negotiating unequal and conflicting social relations.

There is a growing literature that understands this process of negotiation between humans and nonhumans in public spaces in cities as *encountering others* as part of a ‘kaleidoscopic urban world’ (Amin and Thrift 2002, p. 30). Such work includes, for example, Watson’s (2009) characterisation of ‘rubbing along’ in crowded market places, Thrift’s (2005) discussion of geographies of kindness and Laurier and Philo’s (2012) description of casual talk at the bus stop. Yet, Valentine (2008) and Wise (2010) question the potentialities of these convivial encounters and are doubtful of claims that these positive effects could be easily scaled up. Moreover, the very nature of this low-level sociability is challenged. Valentine (2008) argues, rather, that these are signs of a culture of tolerance and identifies a gap between individuals’ values and their practices in public spaces. Similarly, Wise (2010) shows that sensuous encounters in a multicultural setting demand the hard work of everyday negotiations

between people, and that this 'is more difficult for some groups, particularly the elderly, than others' (Wise 2010, p. 935). Although co-existence in public spaces does not necessarily enhance intercultural understanding, Wessendorf (2013) shows in her study of Hackney that the *absence* of such encounters enhances prejudices. Hence, the processes and implications of everyday interactions in public spaces are fiercely debated in cultural geography, and range from celebratory to very critical accounts.

In this thesis, I am particularly concerned with Watson's writings on (dis)enchanted urban encounters (2006, 2009) and Ahmed's theorisation of strange encounters (2000). Watson (2009) understands urban encounters as moving between thin and thick engagements, arguing that race and ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality and culture mediate encounters. These mediations result in an on-going process of negotiation that can be painful and unsettling but also pleasurable and enchanting (Watson 2006) (see Section 2.2.4). In addition, Ahmed (2000) provides critical ways of thinking through 'strange encounters'. She sees an encounter as a meeting between two subjects 'which involves surprise and conflict' (Ahmed 2000, p. 6). Like Massey's conception of place (Massey 2005), Ahmed underlines that encounters are an on-going process of negotiation, in which identities are perpetually re-constituted in relation to others; they are not pre-given entities. According to Ahmed, identities are fixated in the encounter, but never fixed. She puts it as follows: '...encounters between embodied subjects always hesitate between the domain of the particular – the face to face – of this encounter – and the general – the framing of the encounter by broader relationships of power and antagonism. The particular encounter hence always carries traces of these broader relationships' (Ahmed 2000, p. 9). Ahmed's articulation of the hesitation between broader relationships of power and antagonism and the particular of the encounter can be linked to Watson's (2009) thinking on how encounters are embodied, mediated by differences of race and ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality and culture.

Ahmed (2000) further theorises how encounters can shape collectivities. To encounter an other requires work; it involves the traces of previous encounters and broader relationships of power. This process of mediation takes effort; it can be painful to get closer to others. But

Ahmed sees the potential of putting the distance to work: ‘Collectivities are formed through the very work that we need to do in order to get closer to others, without simply repeating the appropriation of “them” as labour, or as a sign of difference. Collectivity then is intimately tied to the secrecy of the encounter: it is not about proximity or distance, but a getting closer which accepts the distance, and puts it to work’ (Ahmed, 2000, p. 180). This thinking recognises the work of social formations, of building collectivities, and opens up the debate by emphasising that difference is not a pre-given, but is re-constituted in the encounter. Ahmed’s conceptualisation of the ‘work’ needed to get closer to others is particularly relevant to this thesis, as it provides a way of thinking through how social relations are constituted and sustained and brings to the fore that this process is not easy and straightforward, but requires ‘work’.

Watson’s (2009) study articulates how throwntogetherness and the encountering of strangers plays out in the urban. In her research on marketplaces, she introduces the notion of ‘rubbing along’, which refers to people sharing urban spaces. Passers-by notice each other, exchange glances, nod, maybe touch each other. Watson argues that these casual encounters create the ‘potential for comingling of differences in a time of segregation and fragmentation of cities’ (Watson 2009, p. 1590). This could thus function as an important counterpoint to people’s tendency to withdraw to privatised and separate spheres—Wessendorf (2013) also underlines this positive effect of sharing public spaces. Moreover, Watson’s research emphasises that encounters are embodied: it is about bodies sharing a space that might ‘rub’ each other.

In the same study, Watson (2009) observes the informal care that is conducted in market places, which goes further than the thin engagement of rubbing along. Especially for older people, the market is a place for ‘sitting together and passing the day’, while market traders express an interest in their lives, being the ‘social glue’ of the site. Watson (2009) calls this a sociality of inclusion (and thus by definition also exclusion). These practices of taking care of others can also be found in private gardens. Bhatti et al. (2009) show how “‘doing-gardening” offers a multitude of opportunities to cultivate both the garden itself, the mind...and at the same time cultivate relationships with friends, family, and non-human beings’ (Bhatti et

al. 2009, p. 90). Bhatti and Church offer a powerful evocation of how taking care of plants can mean the cultivation of relationships between nonhumans and humans far beyond the physical realms of the private garden.

To summarise, cultural geographers are engaged in a lively debate on living with difference in cities, which questions the limitations and potential of urban encounters. This research is informed by Massey's (2005) understanding of urban spaces as being the product of social relations—often unequal and conflicting. Cities create the challenge of negotiating the throwntogetherness of a here-and-now. Both Watson and Ahmed provide critical ways of thinking through these negotiations in public spaces. First of all, encountering others involves surprise and conflict. Identities are re-constituted in the moment of meeting the other. Race and ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality and culture mediate encounters. This process of getting closer to others involves work. Secondly, Ahmed's conceptualisation of the encounter can be linked to the notion of play because it also refers to surprise. Thought of in this way, in the moment of meeting, two subjects are re-constituted, there is an opening, a 'creativity' (Scheel 2013, p. 283). It is the unexpectedness and openness that is underlined here that works particularly well with the understanding of play. According to Huizinga (1938), play contains a 'tension and uncertainty to the outcome' (Huizinga 1950, p. 47). I develop this thinking on urban encounters and playfulness next.

Playfulness in urban encounters can also be thought of in terms of chance, theatricality, and sociability. Massey's (2005) conception of the 'throwntogetherness' of the city evokes this element of chance in urban encounters. For Massey, the chance of space is not exclusive to urban spaces: 'all spaces are, at least a little, accidental' (Massey 2005). Massey argues that it is the instability and potential of the spatial that creates the 'possibility of being surprised'. She does not disregard structuring processes; on the contrary it is the very multiplicity of spatial configurations that produces the chance/openness of space. In other words, the density, intensity and diversity of cities make them sites for playful, spontaneous encounters in which elements of chance can be embraced. The playfulness of urban encounters is discussed by Stevens, for instance, in *The Ludic City*, with the argument that chance encounters 'provide opportunities for



escape from predetermined and ritualized courses of action' (Stevens 2007a). Furthermore, Butcher (2011) shows that chance encounters can challenge the assumptions of fellow passengers in her account of the commuting cultures of the Delhi Metro. Additionally, Adams and Hardman (2013) discuss how guerrilla gardeners seek to interact with people who happen to pass their guerrilla garden.

The playfulness of urban encounters can also refer to the theatricality of social interactions. For example, Watson (2009) observes market traders creating a buzz with their banter and (often inappropriate) jokes. These performances shape a 'social ambiance' that offers opportunities for pleasurable encounters. Similarly, Crewe and Gregson analyse the informal socialities of car-boot sales, which convey a 'sense of vending for fun, pleasure and sociability' (Crewe and Gregson 1998, p. 44). In addition, Stevens (Stevens 2007a) observes how forms of simulation are enacted on the paths, intersections and boundaries of urban spaces. These studies provide interesting examples of playful social interaction for which cracking jokes and performing roles are key. This ties into Caillois' conception of play, specifically mimesis, in which the player 'imagines that he is someone else, and he invents an imaginary universe' (Caillois 1961, p. 44)—see also Section 2.1.2. Playfulness thus has an 'only pretending quality', it fosters the imagination (Rojek 1995, p. 185).

Lastly, urban encounters can be understood as producing sociability, playfulness being expressed in the sheer joy of socially interacting. These urban encounters are argued to be unconcerned with purposes beyond socialising itself. Simmel (1949, p. 259) introduces this conception, writing that sociability is 'the art or play form of association'. He claims that 'in sociability talking is an end in itself; in purely sociable conversation the content is merely the indispensable carrier of the simulation, which the lively exchange of talk as such unfolds' (1949, p. 259). Simmel thus emphasises the process of conversing with others. He suggests that '...as soon as the discussion gets business-like, it is no longer sociable' (Simmel and Hughes 1949, p. 259). In other words, Simmel's version of sociability ceases to be as soon as the conversation begins to serve a purpose beyond the act of socially interacting itself. However, it is very difficult to identify whether people have no further intentions beyond the joy of

encountering others. Simmel's theorisation of sociability advocates an impossible purity of playfulness. Yet, his sociability can be mobilised to articulate urban encounters that gives the meeting subjects enjoyment which is to a lesser degree concerned with outcomes, or temporarily frees itself from commercial incentives. Furthermore, Simmel situates these events of sociability at festive gatherings. He describes activities 'in which people gather to celebrate their common connections' (Henricks 2006, p. 125). In other writings, Simmel has discussed the mental life of the metropolis and how encounters with strangers in the city can also produce routinised, convention bound, distant forms of sociality (Simmel 1997).

To sum up, urban encounters can be informed by playfulness. There are different ways of thinking through the playfulness produced in urban social life, of which I have outlined three here: chance, theatricality and sociability. Urban encounters of chance are about negotiating the unexpected, nurturing an openness to the possibility of surprise in the city. This is about people's attitude to the accidental. Likewise, theatricality is about a playful disposition, performing a role in public space, fostering the imagination and using irony and jokes to create a pleasurable social ambiance. Finally, playfulness can allude to sociability, to urban encounters that are less concerned with what might lie beyond it, and more with enjoyment of the social interaction itself. This form of sociability occurs mostly at festive, social gatherings.

### **2.2.6 Analysing play-work relations in the urban garden**

Section 2.2 has outlined cultural geographies of urban gardening, and this discussion of literature has identified areas for further exploration of how urban gardening practices enact the relations between play and work. Firstly, as shown in Section 2.2.1, gardens are understood in multiple ways: as enclosed, peaceful spaces of escape, as sites produced in relation to the conditions of paid work and as landscapes to be visually consumed, with their production process hidden. These conceptions suggest that gardens provide fertile ground for a case study of how relations between play and work are enacted. Secondly, the wide scope of work in cultural geography on gardening in cities has been delineated; marking out studies on allotment, community and guerrilla gardening. This thesis moves beyond the discussion of urban

gardening practices in terms of their health benefits or of food security and sustainability. Instead, this research focuses on the enactment of play and work in the garden. Thirdly, a specific body of literature which addresses gardens as sites of ambiguity has been discussed. This research will build upon this understanding of gardens as embodied, practiced landscapes, and will contribute to this debate by focusing on play and work. Fourthly, the debates in more-than-human geographies have been interrogated, suggesting that attention should be paid to the more-than-human agencies at play in the process of gardening. This relational understanding, a becoming with, has shown that gardening as a practice can produce moments of enchantment and creativity. It opens up possibilities for an engagement with Huizinga and Caillois' conceptions of play as being absorbing, voluntary and unproductive, as these characteristics are both supported and challenged by the literature discussed in Section 2.2.4. Lastly, current research on urban encounters has been examined, which has shown that there is scope to explore how the work of cultivating public gardens transforms into the cultivation of relationships with strangers, passers-by, volunteers and neighbours. This discussion provides the basis for the formulation of the research questions, which are put forward in the next section.

## *2.3 Research Questions*

This chapter has addressed the concern of how to make sense of urban gardening. To cultivate an urban garden means to dig the soil, plant seeds and expose it to the weather conditions. In that process of interaction between people, plants and animals, the ground starts to shift. This thesis not only attempts to make visible how allotment, community and guerrilla gardeners shift the ground materially, but also to articulate how through their practices, urban gardeners shift the ground of play and work conceptually. As I have shown in this chapter, industrial society made play and work into opposites. However, more recent work in sociology (Rojek 2010) and political economy (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005b) suggests that the distinctions between play and work are not clear cut, while play has been put to work in post-industrial society, producing the figure of the playful worker. Moreover, based on my reading of Rojek, I introduced the idea of working one's play-time to refer to the enhancement of personal capacities for work during

leisure time activities. Yet, I pointed out that there is an opening to be explored in this structural analysis of contemporary society. I have argued that alternatives to the complete appropriation of 'play' by 'work' may be found by studying everyday people's practices and how these enact complex fields of relations between these two social categories. In order to do this, I have proposed to revisit the work of Huizinga and Caillois, as engaging with these key theories on play can produce innovative ways of thinking through the relations between play and work as enacted in urban social life. In this thesis, I cautiously draw on Huizinga and Caillois' conception of play as voluntary and absorbing (affectivity intensity), non-instrumental and unproductive, bounded in time and place, governed by its own rules, open to chance and imaginative.

Following on, I have argued that gardens provide fertile ground for exploring the blurred categories of play and work. I will build on and extend the cultural geography literature that understands gardens as productive of ambiguity, as spaces in which the binaries of nature-culture, private-public and play-work are challenged. Rather than being peaceful, enclosed spaces to be visually consumed, I will understand urban gardens as spaces being worked upon, cultivated, as practiced embodied landscapes. I will discuss the links and discontinuities between ideas of play and work and the embodied practices of gardening, and thereby contribute to the cultural geography literature.

In this thesis, I will thus address the following main research question:

***How do different urban gardening practices enact the relations between play and work?***

This question outlines my specific interest in comparing gardening practices at public sites in the city—namely allotment, community and guerrilla gardening. Furthermore, it emphasises that I understand the concepts of play and work, and their relations, as being produced through the embodied practices of gardeners. Next, I will further unpack the research subquestions, which are based on the above discussion.

### **2.3.1 Paradoxes**

The first research subquestion is:

*Why do people garden?*

This question specifically focuses on how research participants act out, understand and talk about their gardening practices. It explores people's reasons for gardening and how these relate to qualities ascribed to both work and play. The concept of paradoxical space is mobilised to discuss the multiple and contradictory relations produced in the garden. This research subquestion builds on the literature discussed in Section 2.2.3 on gardens as embodied practiced landscapes, in which the binaries of nature-culture, private-public and work-play break down into entangled contingencies. Furthermore, it contributes to the debates on enchantments enacted in the garden, as discussed in Section 2.2.4.

### **2.3.2 Boundaries**

The second research subquestion is:

*How do the embodied practices of gardening create distinct time-spaces for play and/or work?*

By analysing urban gardening practices, I will discuss the spatial and temporal distinctions made between play and work. Here, Huizinga's bounded notion of the 'playground' is foregrounded and brought into dialogue with the spatial imagination of the enclosed garden. This research question critically addresses Huizinga's spatial and temporal distinctions of play and work by exploring the boundary making practices of gardeners. This research question thereby builds upon the literature on ambiguities in gardens discussed in Section 2.2.3, extending the understanding of the garden as a place in which binaries break down into entangled contingencies. It is also attentive to the more-than-human geographies involved in the making of urban gardens, as discussed in Section 2.2.4.

### **2.3.3 Encounters**

The third research subquestion is:

*How do encounters among and between humans and non-humans, taking place during gardening, cultivate socialities in the city?*

I address how social relations are made and unmade whilst people garden. This involves the challenge of negotiating the diversity and density of urban spaces, their throwntogetherness. It also addresses the intimate work of getting closer to others. In addition, as I have outlined in section 2.2.5, I will examine playfulness in terms of openness to chance encounters, theatricality and sociability. I will thus explore the socialities enacted whilst gardening in the city, and thereby address forms of playfulness in social relations between humans and more-than-humans. In doing so, I contribute to the debates on urban encounters (see Section 2.2.5) and more-than-human geographies (see Section 2.2.4).

### **2.3.4 Summary and upcoming chapters**

This chapter has discussed the complex relations between play and work. While play was understood as distinct during modern times, in current society play has been mobilised as the key to economic growth. This thesis aims to make some of the relations between play and work visible. Urban gardening practices offer a relevant and rich case study to articulate the complex web of the entangled contingencies of naturecultures, play and work. The literature review has identified several underexplored areas in the cultural geography debates on embodied practiced landscapes, more-than-human geographies and urban encounters. The deployment of Huizinga's understanding of play offers the potential to shed new light on the relations between play and work as enacted by gardeners in cities on an everyday basis. Finally, this chapter has formulated research questions, which shape the analysis in this thesis.

Next, Chapter 3 will outline the methods and methodology of this research. This will be followed by three empirical chapters, which each address one of the three research sub-questions. Chapter 4 will explore people's reasons for gardening, Chapter 5 will discuss the creation of distinct time-spaces of play and/or work, while Chapter 6 will shed light on the multiple forms of encounters that produce specific socialities whilst gardening. Finally,

conclusions are drawn in Chapter 7, which will return to some of the questions raised in this chapter and bring these into contact with the findings discussed in the three empirical chapters.

## Chapter 3. Designing an Ethnography of Urban Gardening

In this chapter, I discuss the research methods chosen to study urban gardening practices. The first section provides a brief overview of the methods applied, which is followed by a discussion of ethnography as a research approach. Then, in sections 3.3 to 3.7, I describe the research methods in detail: participant observation, go-along, semi-structured interviews, archival work and photography. Section 3.8 introduces the case studies, while Section 3.9 describes research ethics. Finally, Section 3.10 looks at how the data was analysed and written up. In addition, the appendices contain documents that provide more detail on the research process and the data collected. An overview of the data collected can be found in Appendix A; Appendix B provides a go-along topic list; the information and consent form can be found in Appendix C; and Appendix D contains the coding list.

### *3.1 Research Methods: an overview*

The methods applied in the research are informed by a broadly ethnographic approach. This particular research design is driven by the research questions discussed in Chapter 2. Applied methods are well suited for exploring the key themes of these research questions: embodiments, practices, spatial and temporal boundaries, socialities and the meanings which gardeners attribute to gardening. The research results are shaped by multiple encounters in the ‘field’ over an extended period of time. The ‘field’ for this research encompassed three case studies: an allotment site in North London, a community garden in East London and a diverse set of guerrilla garden patches in both North and South London. The ethnography concentrated on the gardeners who were active at these sites over a one-year period. I conducted research on these three London case studies simultaneously, which allowed me to compare observations and notes across the different urban gardening practices whilst doing the fieldwork. This gives this ethnography of different urban gardening practices in London a comparative character.

This ethnographic approach is manifested in five main ways. First, I carried out participant observation with urban gardeners. This entailed joining urban gardeners in their



practices in allotment, community and guerrilla spaces. I made field notes of the informal conversations I had with gardeners, the things that happened during gardening, and my own impressions of doing gardening. Second, I conducted garden go-alongs. A go-along is basically a walk and talk through the garden with a research participant. In these conversations, I encouraged gardeners not only to talk about their gardening practices and experiences, but also to show me their garden and provide commentary on the things we saw, smelt and touched. I recorded these conversations, and used the recordings to make transcripts. Third, I held semi-structured interviews with garden coordinators. Fourth, photography plays a key part in this ethnography of urban gardening practices, and I used it to document both the participant observations and the garden go-alongs. Last, I conducted archival work which focused on the local history and institutional settings of the case studies. This involved gathering and analysing legal and policy documents on urban gardening, as well as studying newspaper clippings and self-published zines and books on the garden case studies. This archival work functioned primarily to help understand the background of the case studies, which helped to better position the personal accounts of gardeners.

These five research methods generated a diverse set of data: interview transcripts, go-along transcripts, field notes, photographs, screenshots of online gardening and paper documents on the case studies (zines, maps, planning documents, council reports and legislation).

This is a comparative study, which is reflected in the analysis I have conducted. I have attempted to make sense of these different sorts of data in conjunction with each other, the materials informing each other.

All the elements in this brief overview will be discussed in more detail in this chapter, starting with doing ethnographies.

### *3.2 Doing ethnographies*

This study adopts an ethnographic approach in order to explore the relationship between play and work through an in-depth study of urban gardening practices. I argue that it is this

qualitative approach that is best suited to making visible the material, spatial, temporal and social elements of urban gardening. Ethnography also offers the opportunity to begin to unravel how gardeners understand their practices. As Crang and Cook argue, ethnography's engagement with 'real world messiness' is the 'most valuable contribution' it can make (2007, p. 14). Yet, this does not mean understanding participants' *talk* as *the* truth. Crang and Cook suggest involving oneself in the 'struggle to produce inter-subjective truths', and they continue by stating that

*...it is the ways in which people make sense of the events around them, and render these 'true' in their own terms, that is most revealing about how their/our lives are embroiled in larger social, cultural, economic and political processes. Therefore, stories told in the research encounter are not simply to be regarded as means of mirroring the world, but as the means through which it is constructed, understood and acted out. (Crang and Cook 2007, p. 14)*

Thus, I understand participants' stories and actions in the 'field' as the means through which urban gardeners construct, understand and act out their world.

Doing ethnographies means 'paying as close attention to social practices (what people do) as to social discourses (what people say)' (Whatmore 2003, p. 93). This involves extended periods of engagement with research participants' everyday routines, a process known as participant observation. Thereby ethnography comes 'closest to the notion of "generating materials", as opposed to "collecting data", of any method in social sciences' (Whatmore 2003, p. 93). This notion that ethnographers generate material rather than collect data is also evoked by Clifford (2010), who argues that ethnography 'decodes and recodes, telling the grounds of collective order and diversity, inclusion and exclusion. It describes processes of innovation and structuration, and is itself part of these processes' (Clifford 2010, p. 3). Ethnographers are thus part of the processes that they study—something which is not limited to ethnography, but which is also relevant to other types of research. According to Clifford, an ethnographic approach decodes and recodes the ways in which social worlds are organised and made sense of. Ethnographers are concerned with processes of inclusion and exclusion, innovation and structuration.

However, it remains a challenge to unravel how the researcher is part of the social processes that (s)he studies. It is not straightforward to analyse precisely how one's role as an ethnographer shapes the social settings being studied. And as Clifford points out, the researcher's influence does not stop with social interactions in the field. The crux is how things are written up in notebooks and research papers. Consequently, attempts to conduct critical research involve some sort of self-reflexivity. In this respect, Rose (1997) writes about the limitations on the researcher's self-reflexivity, arguing for researchers to inscribe 'absences and fallibilities' in their writings (Rose 1997, p. 319). These authors thus suggest working with the gaps in the generation and analysis of data rather than trying to fill them in. I return to these concerns throughout this chapter. Rose, Clifford and Crang and Cook all allude to the performativity of research methods. Likewise, Law (2004, p. 143) writes about how our methods help to produce realities, that they are performative. There is no such thing as a given reality, waiting to be unveiled by researchers. Rather than a 'successful set of procedures' deployed to uncover reality, methods are embodied social practices which bring worlds into being (2004, p. 143). Ways of generating data thus not only shape findings and help bring things into being, but also leave things unsaid, render others out of focus and unmake realities. The choice of how to conduct research, and the doing of research, thus have 'political implications' (Law 2004, p. 143).

I hope that this thesis can play a part in making visible both the tireless playful practices of urban gardeners and gardeners' understanding of these practices. This research, by choosing an ethnographic stance, might help to make gardeners' voices heard in the midst of the hustle and bustle of the city. In the act of listening, so characteristic of ethnography, we 'can find a different kind of ethics'. This research attempts to pay attention to 'otherwise glossed over aspects of life that would otherwise be lost in the cacophony of contemporary culture' (Back 2016, p. 211). By bringing together gardeners and dissecting their experiences of shaping urban green spaces, this thesis might interfere in popular views of public gardens as uncontested, peaceful, escapist green spaces of leisure. However, the ethnographic approach can also help to produce realities that put the experiences and negotiations of people cultivating their everyday

surroundings at the forefront in an entrepreneurial city (Harvey 1989), dominated by economic forces.

Summing up, I have chosen an ethnographic approach to study the specific embodied practice of urban gardening. This has brought me to all kinds of corners, alleys and roads in the city, where people cultivate pieces of greenery and derive joy and pain from doing so. Doing ethnography has enabled me to analyse urban gardeners' ways of doing gardening, how they feel about it and how they understand their practices.

### *3.3 Participant-observation*

Participating in urban gardening practices has helped me to develop understandings of garden work, map its everyday routines and ways of doing, be part of the socialities created therein and explore its corpo-realities. As this research method has provided data (informal talk and observations) on people's reasons for being involved in gardening, it has thereby helped me to address the concerns of the first sub question: *why do people garden?* Furthermore, it has provided a way to gain insight into forms of embodiment produced in the garden, thus addressing not only the first, but also the second sub question: *How do the embodied practices of gardening create distinct time-spaces for play and/or work?* I was able to observe bodies doing gardening, but I could also reflect upon my own bodily involvement. In addition, participant observation as a method has provided the necessary data for sub research question three: *How do encounters among and between humans and non-humans, taking place during gardening, cultivate socialities in the city?* As I joined in the practices of gardening, I could witness and take part in encounters both among humans and between humans and nonhumans. I discuss all of these aspects here, and I also reflect upon the possibilities and limitations of writing field-notes.

First of all, I engaged in the doing of gardening for all three case studies: allotment, community and guerrilla gardening. This engagement meant being part of the volunteering sessions at the community garden on Saturday afternoons, which were relatively easy to access as a structure for volunteering was in place, so I could just join in their weekly gardening

activities. In respect to the allotment gardeners, I paid regular visits to the site, and I would spend a morning, an afternoon or whole day there. While talking with plot-holders, I would offer them my 'help' with digging, weeding, harvesting etc. This offer was not always taken up, as they probably had reservations about any interference in their allotment plot. Participating in guerrilla gardening meant that I would join in 'digs' organised by groups or individual gardeners. These digs were announced on Facebook groups and blogs, or gardeners would inform me by email, and again I would attempt to do active gardening during those digs. But participating in guerrilla gardening also entailed visiting Facebook groups and sharing photos for blogs, thus also engaging in online gardening spaces. This online presence was also relevant for community gardening, especially following Twitter accounts, reading newsletters and sharing images. In terms of planning and coordination, I followed these groups during the one year fieldwork period. I engaged with all three groups at the 'same' time rather than, for example, following allotments first and then guerrilla gardening. This allowed me to compare practices whilst doing the fieldwork, which has enhanced my understanding. A detailed overview of participant-observation dates and locations can be found in Appendix A.

Reckwitz suggests that an embodied practice can be understood by both its agent(s) and its potential observers (Reckwitz 2002, p. 250), which provides the basis for the fieldwork I have conducted. Furthermore, Hitchings (2012) argues that research participants can talk about their everyday routines. I have aimed to pull out the specificities of the routinised way of working with things, people and plants, which entailed having informal chats with research participants for instance. I found that they would involve themselves in little jobs at the same time, like picking up a plastic bag, rearranging plants, tightening the net covering the cabbage or opening the greenhouse door to let in some fresh air. This suggests a way of being at the allotment plot: picking up stuff, doing an odd job whilst hanging around. This may be markedly different to participants' way of working at their everyday office jobs, and seems less task oriented.

In addition, the participant observation research method provides useful insights into how gardening creates socialities (addressing the third sub-question of this thesis). This method

allowed me to reflect upon these performed encounters. Engaging with these three different case studies gave me an opportunity to observe, be part of, and jot down encounters between (non)humans that would be difficult to pull out if only interviews with participants were used. Observing and doing the gardening made me part of the sociality at the garden spaces, and reflecting on these social encounters informs the analysis. Furthermore, throughout the participant observations I collected data about what kinds of events were being organised, by whom and how. Lastly, participant observation also made me explore the corporealities of doing garden work. By joining in the digging, chatting and weeding, I attempted to grasp the experience of embodiment. These are things that ‘are on the edge of being articulable’ (Rose 2003, p. 49), and I fully acknowledge the limitations in representing these corporealities (Pile 2010). Nevertheless, I found this important to explore, as embodiment directly relates to the main research question on the relations between play and work.

The key part of participant observation is writing, by which I mean keeping a research diary that translates these engagements with urban gardening into ‘data’. I discuss the potentials and limitations of making field notes and how I have used this technique within the research. During the research period, I kept a diary in which I described the observations I made, attempted to represent my own embodied experience and reflected on being a researcher whilst gardening. Notes were made immediately after a day of gardening, in order to keep the thoughts fresh. Cloke et al.’s (2004) six layers of description for making ethnographic notes formed an inspiration for this research. These layers are:

- a. Locating an ethnographic setting;
- b. Describing the physical space of that setting;
- c. Describing others’ interactions within that setting;
- d. Describing your participation in interactions in that setting;
- e. Reflecting on the research process;
- f. Self-reflections.

(Cloke et. al 2004, pp. 201-204 in Crang and Cook 2007, pp. 51–52)

The above functioned as a check list for writing up my notes in the afternoon or evening after participating in gardening. I did not go through each point in order, but instead tried to cover each aspect in a stream of writing. These field notes aim to describe the events that unfolded, the materialities I encountered and the informal conversations I had, resulting in a collection of ‘vignettes’ (Harper 1987), which are analysed in relation to the other data gathered, and which were rewritten for the thesis text.

Field notes as (hand)written accounts are not the only means of documenting participant observation. Blommaert and Jie (2010) plead for the ‘collection of rubbish’ during fieldwork, by which they mean collecting things like ‘objects, texts, newspaper clippings, audio and video tapes, books and booklets, flyers, announcements, advertisements...name it’ (Blommaert and Jie 2010, p. 58). These things can help one remember events, and some of these materials become relevant later in analysis. In addition, the collection of field notes and materials also produces an archive of doing research; it is an important source for reflecting upon the process of knowledge production. Through the act of writing down experiences, research themes are compared and developed. Re-reading notes provide insight into how the researcher felt during events, what was new to her or him, and how frames of understanding shift over time. Field notebooks thus represent an ‘epemistic process’ (Blommaert and Jie 2010, p. 36). However, there are also limitations to writing field notes. First of all, it is very difficult to remember every event in detail, or what exactly has been said. Taussig (2011) vividly describes the frustration that an ethnographer can feel in his drive to ‘write all down just as it was’ (Taussig 2011, p. 13). He speaks of ‘that relentless drive that makes you feel sick as the very words you write down seem to erase the reality you are writing about’ (Taussig 2011, p. 13). In addition, field notes are descriptions of social processes, of which the researcher is fully part. It is very difficult, in fact impossible, to exactly unravel these complex social interactions, the power dynamics at play and the identities constructed.

The above discussion informed my practice of making field notes, which I try to describe further here. The topics I would often cover in these notes are the day’s weather, the setting, social encounters, summaries of informal conversations, accounts of my journey to the

site and my personal reflections on conducting fieldwork. I wrote most field notes by hand in notebooks in a location close to the gardening site (yet usually out of ‘sight’). I would frequently sit in the café of the Arcola Theatre to write up my notes about an afternoon spent volunteering at the Eastern Curve Community Garden; for the allotment site, I often spent time in cafés around Wood Green or Green Lanes; and for the guerrilla gardening, wherever the dig was I would find a space to sit down, drink a coffee and write up the day’s notes. I want to underline here the importance of taking notes by hand immediately after participating in gardening. I could grasp the ‘atmosphere’ of events better and remember the details of conversations I had had. I used identical notebooks, which I numbered. I tried to type up these notes within a week, and found that when typing them up on my laptop, I would extend them further with details that sprang to mind, adding reflections on the interactions and the research themes. I typed up all my notes into individual Word documents, and then uploaded them to the MAXQDA software tool.

### *3.4 Go-Along*

Participant observations formed the basis for the garden go-alongs held with the research participants. Go-alongs as a research method gave me the opportunity to talk with participants about what they particularly enjoyed about their gardening practices, and so they generated data that contributed to addressing the first research subquestion: *why do people garden*.

Furthermore, this was an effective method to explore how participants understood the materialities and spatialities of their urban gardens as we walked together through these spaces, which relates to the second research subquestion on the distinct time-space of play and work and practices of boundary making in the garden. Finally, go-alongs also produced insights into the diverse and multiple encounters enacted in the garden, because I could observe and take part in these encounters whilst walking and talking in situ. This has helped to address the third research subquestion on how gardeners cultivate socialities.

Inspired by the go-along (Kusenbach 2003, Degen and Rose 2012) and ride-along (Spinney 2006, van Duppen and Spierings 2013) methods, these go-alongs took place in situ at the various garden spaces. Kusenbach describes the go-along as follows: ‘when conducting go-



along, fieldworkers accompany individual informants on their “natural” outings, and – through asking questions, listening and observing – actively explore their subjects’ stream of experiences and practices as they move through, and interact with, their physical and social environment’ (Kusenbach 2003, p. 463). Cultural geographers have used versions of the go-along and have found them particularly useful for accessing participants’ embodied practices and perceptions of places. Hitchings (2010) conducted two in-depth interviews with each research participant to examine their gardening practices. One of these interviews entailed a walk around their private garden, in which researcher and participant ‘were constantly reminded of the material presence of the plants in the garden’ (Hitchings 2010, p. 103). Similarly, Ginn’s (2014) account of the sticky lives of slugs in private gardens is based on ‘show me your garden’ interviews. He argued that whilst walking through the private garden together, participants demonstrated ‘their practices, described the rhythms of gardening, their visions of past and future spaces, the lives and deaths of particular plants’ (Ginn 2014, p. 3). Both Ginn and Hitchings show the value of walking and talking through the garden with research participants. For this research, I have attempted to extend these garden walk and talks by developing a relationship with participants over a longer period. This has helped me to gain a better understanding of gardeners’ practices and enabled me to ask participants specific questions based on previous observations and informal conversations.

In particular, the prompts of the surroundings stimulate conversation and create the opportunity for participants to show and explain the specific characteristics of their garden. This was particularly useful for observing and eliciting participants’ interpretations of their encounters with humans and non-humans. I encouraged participants to walk me through their spaces of gardening and talk about the things we encountered. This could simply mean walking around the community garden, but it also entailed a longer walk, taking in several scattered and neglected council planters which had been turned into guerrilla gardening spaces, or a walk from a research participant’s private garden to the allotment site.

The talk generated in these go-alongs provides insight into how research participants make sense of their gardening practices, as well as the meanings they attribute to the garden as a

place. As Section 3.2 outlined, participants' talk does not represent 'the truth', nor does it fully capture the sensory or affective dimensions. Rather, participants' stories are a means through which urban gardeners construct, understand and act their world, and they are therefore useful to study. Watkins (2015) puts forward a productive way of understanding research participants' talk about gardens. He discusses how spatial imaginaries are 'socially held stories, ways of representing and talking about places and spaces' (Watkins 2015, p. 509). These stories can be seen as 'performative discourse'; ideas of the garden are reproduced in everyday talk, but they are also enacted in material (embodied) practices, and these enactments hold the potential to 'modify spatial imaginaries' (Watkins 2015, p. 511). This particular understanding of performances as iterative, unstable and uncertain is influenced by Butler's (1990) writings on gender. Gregson and Rose develop geographic thinking about the relation between performativity and spatialities, arguing that 'slippage is always possible' (2000, p. 441). Thus, one aim of the go-alongs was to trace the relations between shared and reproduced ideas of 'the garden', and see how these are enacted in participants' everyday lives.

Ginn (2014), Hitchings (2012) and Bhatti et al. (2009) all analysed private garden spaces, whereas I have examined public garden space. Consequently, other gardeners and visitors who happened to be present in the garden space mediated the garden go-alongs I conducted. These mediations are exemplified by interruptions of the go-along by fellow gardeners having a brief catch-up. In one case, a participant started to whisper, as (s)he wanted to express some sensitive views about other gardeners. Thus, some participants might have felt unable to talk entirely uninhibitedly about their fellow gardeners because they were often also present in the space. However, these interactions with other gardeners during go-alongs also provided evidence which I used to analyse urban encounters.

Research participants for the go-alongs were selected after establishing contact and gaining an initial understanding of their background. Decisions on whom to invite for go-alongs were informed by the overarching discussion of how urban gardening practices enact the relation between play and work. As this thesis is concerned with urban gardening practices, I composed a sample of research participants that reveals the diversity of ways of gardening. The

choice also depended on how responsive people were. Some cancelled interviews, some did not turn up, and some were simply not willing to be pinned down to a date, so I started conducting ‘spontaneous’ go-alongs. I conducted go-alongs with:

- 14 allotment gardeners, of which 11 were tape-recorded;
- 13 community garden volunteers, all 13 of which were tape-recorded;
- 7 guerrilla gardeners, of which 5 were tape-recorded.

(More details on the go-alongs can be found in Appendix A)

For various reasons, I was unable to make tape recordings of some garden go-alongs. In such cases, I made notes of the contents of the conversation immediately afterwards.

I conducted go-alongs in order to let participants talk about their practice at the places where they enact them, or in other words, these were shared show and tell walks. I would ask participants to show me the garden and talk me through the plants and the work they undertook. This often involved smelling leaves, pulling out weeds and tasting produce straight from the plant. Prompts in the garden such as dry soil, flowering apple trees or aromatic plants produced conversation topics. Being situated in the garden space also gave the conversation a less formal interview setting, which I felt was more appropriate for this research topic. I believe that the research participants also felt more at ease walking through the garden where they spend their leisure time, in contrast to being seated behind a table opposite the researcher. The timings of the go-alongs aligned with their gardening practice. I scheduled go-alongs to occur before or after community volunteering, guerrilla digs or allotment work. These garden go-alongs therefore came closer to their mundane experience, and the participants would usually have turned up to the garden anyway. Sometimes it also worked the other way around, and my request for an interview would make some (guerrilla) gardeners initiate a dig, with which I would join in.

Most importantly, participant observation informed the garden go-alongs. In most cases, I had already met the participant, so we were familiar with each other and some sort of trust had already been created. I feel that this improved the quality of the conversations and also allowed

me to ask specific questions about their particular gardening practices. I tried to have a free-flowing conversation with research participants about why they garden, their embodied experiences and their encounters with other (non)humans. I designed a set of interview topics with accompanying questions in order to loosely structure the conversations (a topic list can be found in Appendix B), but I aimed to create an open space for talk about their garden routines and experiences. Thus, the focus was more on collecting stories and anecdotes than on pushing for explicit or confined answers to questions. In this way, I could follow up on their remarks and further explore their experiences and interpretations of gardening. The majority of these garden go-alongs were recorded and later transcribed. I also asked participants whether I could use images of the garden that specifically related to our conversation.

### *3.5 Semi-structured interviews*

In addition to the garden go-alongs, I held interviews with the allotment site-secretary, the community garden co-ordinator and the leading figures in the guerrilla gardening cases. These semi-structured interviews (Bryman 2004) also took place at the garden spaces, but they were less focused on walking around the garden and more on gaining insights into how the garden practice is set up and what kind of regulations or rules are enforced. I found that these garden coordinators were able to elaborate on how they think their ‘communities’ work, what they see as their current challenges and how they conceive of their histories. This provided background information to better situate the three different gardening practices. These conversations also fed into the discussion on play and work, as I asked garden coordinators to reflect on their organising role in terms of the concepts of play and work. In order to get a better understanding of the urban planning and design process of the Eastern Curve Community Garden, I also arranged a meeting with two design studios that contributed hugely to the design and making of the space. This was a joint meeting with Johanna Gibbons from J & L Gibbons landscape architecture studio and Liza Fior from muf architecture/art.

### *3.6 Archival work*

As part of the ethnography, I also undertook archival work, which was aimed at analysing the particular histories, the urban planning context and the institutional regulations of the urban gardening case studies. For the allotment gardening case study, this entailed examination of the allotment holder rent agreement, old survey maps of the area (Ordnance Survey Office 1993) and a book on Wood Green's history (Pinching 2000), as well as exploration of documentation about the Allotment Gardening Society available online. For the community gardening case study, archival work encompassed study of the urban planning reports 'Making Space for Dalston' (J&L-Gibbons and Muf-architecture/art 2009) and 'Is this what you mean by localism?' (Long *et al.* 2012), as well as looking at newspaper clippings about the community garden. Lastly, archival work for the guerrilla gardening case study focused on small zines, online blogs and handbooks about guerrilla gardening written by guerrilla gardeners themselves (Wilson and Weinberg 1999, Tracey 2007, Reynolds 2009).

### *3.7 Photography*

This section first discusses photography as a research method and examines the technologies and practices that produced the images for this research (Rose and Tolia-Kelly 2012, p. 4). The second part of this section describes in more depth the rationale for each of the three photo-essays presented in this thesis.

#### **3.7.1 Photography as a research method: Encounters & the Camera**

Taking photographs can be part of various research methods. Rose suggests that the images we make during our research should not be thought of as 'transparent windows that allow us to peer into places we would never otherwise see', but that we should instead understand photos 'more as prisms that refract what can be seen in quite particular ways' (Rose 2008, p. 151).

Thus, the three photo-essays presented in this thesis produce different kinds of partial knowledge and will hopefully refract what can be seen of urban gardening. In her discussion on making photo-essays, Rose (2016, pp. 340–343) suggests that researchers should think carefully about whether photo-essays are intended to be more analytical or evocative, or to carry out both

tasks. Furthermore, she recommends considering the relations between photographs and text. This thesis makes use of photo-essays that both give a feel for the practices of gardening and present an argument which I will discuss in more detail in the following sections (3.7.2, 3.7.3, 3.7.4).

Photographs can thus evoke ‘the sensory experience and feel of urban environments’ (Rose 2016, p. 341), and can be understood as the product of encounters between people, objects and the camera. Hunt describes this potential of the camera acutely: ‘In the literal snap of the camera, photography can visualise moments of encounter, commemorate them, and create them...It may capture the affective potential of urban encounters and the relationships between space, objects, events, and ourselves’ (Hunt 2014, p. 156). Figure 7, which is part of the photo-essay ‘getting your hands dirty’, makes clear how images both visualise and create moments of encounter.



**Figure 7 Anna's hands, community gardener**

The image was made at the community garden during a volunteering afternoon I took part in. Whilst I was walking around with my camera, Anna (one of the volunteers) spontaneously put her hands forward for me to photograph. She had been working in the soil for an afternoon, thus her hands were grubby. This image exemplifies what Back (2004) terms the ‘making of an image’, as opposed to the colloquial terminology of ‘taking a picture’. With that particular choice of words, make rather than take, Back emphasises the co-constituted, reciprocal process of photography. Images can be produced within the encounter between people and the camera.

This is also the way in which the photographic images in this thesis have been created. These photo-essays are shaped and informed by my sustained engagement with urban gardeners.

During fieldwork, my research practice of photography was encountered differently at each garden site. In other words, the specific spatialities and socialities of the three garden practices, as well as the technique of the camera, shaped the encounters which took place and the visual data produced – see also Pink's (2007, p. 43) discussion of local visual cultures. For this research, I used a DSLR camera (Nikon D80). Not so many years ago, this type of camera might have been considered professional, or at least one for enthusiastic amateurs. Nowadays, however, many more people use this type of camera. They have become a ubiquitous object, especially in touristic areas of the city. This holds true for the community garden. Community gardeners are used to seeing people taking photos of the garden, and they also often take pictures themselves. As a consequence, I easily fitted in with this camera, and I did not feel too obtrusive when engaging in photography at the community garden. However, the allotment garden is located in a neighbourhood which is much less frequented by tourists. Moreover, the site is not accessible to the public, and there is no widely shared routinised practice of photographing one's allotment plot. Thus, at the allotment site I stood out as 'the researcher with the camera'. This was further enhanced by the nature of the space, which is very open, making me very visible in the field. Subsequently, allotment gardeners immediately identified me as different, as someone else. Lastly, I observed that the camera had become an inherent part of guerrilla gardening, and I therefore became easily 'immersed' in the field. Guerrilla gardeners use the camera as a tool for gardening, just like a set of secateurs. Most guerrilla gardeners I engaged with documented their interventions in the urban fabric, publishing them online in Facebook groups or blogs. During fieldwork, for all three practices, I was asked several times to share my images with research participants, which I did.

Thus, I have so far discussed in general terms what photographs can 'do' for a research project, images being both products of and productive of encounters between people, spaces and the camera, and how the act of making images was constituted differently for each case study. The next three sections outline how each photo-essay deploys photography differently as a

research tool. Photo-essay A uses photography to evoke the feeling of doing gardening, specifically the performed gestures of body and hand. Photo-essay B applies photography systematically, with the research process being structured by a photo-script (Suchar 1997) to generate data on how garden boundaries are produced. Photo-essay C deploys photography to visually document the playful material practices of urban gardeners. This third approach comes close to the way a documentary photographer works, capturing a scene whilst being immersed in the topic and the local setting.

### **3.7.2 Photo-essay A: Getting your hands dirty**

This photo-essay takes a closer look at how urban gardeners understand the corporeality and materiality of their urban gardening practices through visual exploration of a phrase often uttered by research participants: ‘getting your hands dirty’. This photo-essay is thus part of the analysis of embodiments, a concern of research subquestions one and two. Furthermore, this photo-essay explores the materialities and spatialities of the garden, which helps to address the second research subquestion on how gardening practices enact time-spaces of play and/or work. This visual mode of investigation produces a more-than-text-based form of knowledge about gardening embodiments and materialities.

In stating ‘I love getting my hands dirty’, participants refer to an idiom which, as well as its literal meaning of grubby, muddy hands, means doing hard manual work. The photos used in this photo-essay portray the bodily gestures performed in the garden, illustrating brief moments of gardening practices. This is not an attempt to map all the embodied practices of gardening. Rather, it aims to give readers a *feel* for the embodied practices of gardening. I attempt to convey and compare the visual and embodied qualities of gardening, as images can suggest: ‘layout, colour, texture, form, volume, size and pattern’ (Rose 2012, p. 298). In this respect, Pink (2007) argues that images can get closer to the sensory experience, closer than words or numbers can. I do not align with this position of images being better at representing the sensory and affective. Rather, I hold that it is another (also limited) way of representing the sensory, which, being a different way, enriches the account of urban gardening practices. Or, to quote Howard Becker (2002, p. 11), it gives ‘real, flesh and blood life’ to the abstract tale of the



complex relations enacted between play and work in the urban garden. This photo-essay aims to contribute to the ethnographic work done by cultural geographers on what Vannini calls ‘animating life-worlds’ (Vannini 2015, p. 3), by which he means ethnography styles that ‘enliven, render, resonate, rupture, re-imagine, and...generate possibilities for fabulation’ (Vannini 2015, p. 4). In so doing, this photo-essay could be seen as a response to Latham’s call to cultural geographers to let our methods ‘dance a little’ (Latham and Conradson 2003, p. 2000 in Vannini 2015, p. 3). Latham’s plea is especially appropriate here, as this thesis discusses notions of play.

I used a 35mm lens during fieldwork, a type of lens which ‘can virtually reproduce what the eye sees’ (Harper 2003, p. 261). This lens does not allow the photographer to zoom in or out of the scene being photographed, nor does it have a very wide-angle or telephoto. This specific technology required me to be physically close to research participants to be able to fill the frame with their hands in action. This means I had to lean over, bend, sit, come physically closer to the participant. The attributes of this technology have several implications. First of all, this indicates that I had established a rapport with the participants, and I had indeed built up trust with them over an extended period of time. I was always explicit about the purpose of making images, thus these images were not taken secretly, but made with consent. Furthermore, they are a product of on-going encounters during fieldwork. Yet, I do not claim that getting physically close means that I come closer to any kind of truth. As I argued before, together these images form partial knowledges. Secondly, these reflections on the affordances of the lens underline the corporeality of doing fieldwork. Making images is a very physical act, and there is a specific attunement between the camera, the body and the surroundings. This notion echoes the very scenes that are depicted in the photographs’ bodily gestures. Thirdly, the particular framing of these images is the result of ‘active looking’ as part of an ethnographic study. As Harper emphasises, this type of visual, engaged research involves ‘self-conscious decisions about framing’ (Harper 2003, p. 261).

### **3.7.3 Photo-essay B: De-Constructing Garden Boundaries**

In Chapter 2, it was brought to the fore that some theorists (Huizinga 1950, Caillois 1961) argue that play is enacted in a bounded space set apart from everyday life. This bounded notion of play in urban gardening is the concern of the second research subquestion. In order to explore spatial boundary making practices, this photo-essay records and analyses how borders between garden spaces take shape, addressing the question: ‘How are borders between garden spaces materialised?’ Becker, for example, found that the boundaries constructed by allotment holders in Sweden ‘were often directed against a neighbour from a different ethnic group or the hegemony of the dominant culture’ (Becker 2000, p. 115).

To answer this question, I formulated a shooting-script, informed by Suchar’s idea of the photo-script (1997). Suchar argues that shooting scripts work as ‘guides for photographic and sociological seeing’ (Suchar 1997, p. 35). The shooting script is a set of questions about a ‘subject matter’, explicitly informed by the theoretical discussion of the research. The shooting script outlines what the researcher is interested in and how (s)he is going to document and analyse the visual data. This method suggests being very clear up front what kind of images one is collecting and how these help to contribute to the conceptual discussion. This encourages the researcher to sit down and look at the images, annotate their meaning for the research questions, and through the open coding process identify themes that help to understand the phenomena under study. Throughout the process questions might be reformulated, as Suchar underlines the flexible character of the method, and thus sites might be revisited for additional photo series. I have worked with this understanding of the shooting script, a difference being that I worked with digital images rather than the film roll Suchar made use of. Consequently, the sets of images and their ‘end’ are not limited by the length of the film roll (approximately 36 photos), but rather by the size of the SD-card inside the body of the camera (approximately 1000 photos). This presents a challenge for the researcher, because it becomes more important to define the parameters of the visual investigation.

At the allotment site, I structured the making of images as follows. I took a photo of every third plot I passed whilst walking past all the allotment plots at the site. I stood on the

main path and focused the camera on the right hand side of the plot. I thereby also captured the neighbouring plot, the path in between the plots and how the border of the main plot runs down to the end. Each single image shows the ‘front’ and ‘side’ of the plot. This produced a series of images that shows the great diversity of how allotment gardeners mark the borders of their plots. At the community garden, the volunteers do not look after individual plots assigned to them. Instead the garden volunteers look after the garden space as a whole together, supervised by the garden coordinators. Therefore, I focused the photo-script on how raised beds and other kinds of planters intersect with spaces intended for garden visitors to sit and relax. This series of images investigates the materials used for demarcating the borders between spaces to be looked at on the one hand and spaces to walk through or sit in on the other hand. In contrast to the allotment and community gardening case studies, the guerrilla gardening cases I studied did not take place in large enclosed spaces with only one or two entrances. Instead, the guerrilla gardeners I engaged with cultivate small patches of land alongside or in public spaces, or in raised beds owned by the council but neglected. All of these were situated in the midst of car-traffic or busy pedestrian spaces etc. As with the community garden, I made images of how raised beds and other kinds of planters intersected with the spaces of flow directly next to them. In line with the photo-script, this visually analysed the ways in which the boundaries of garden spaces are made. This shows the practice of marking out garden territory, but also the mixing of garden and urban spaces. Thus, I worked with a similar photo-script for each case study, translating the question to the specific context of the case studies. This contributes to the comparative nature of this thesis.

### **3.7.4 Photo-essay C: Indexing Playful Material Practices**

This photo-essay depicts an inventory of the playful material practices of allotment gardeners. In doing so, it addresses the second research question on how urban gardening practices produce time-space of play and/or work and also provides insights for the third research question on the creativities of encountering more-than-humans.

This photo-essay’s mode of investigation takes inspiration from Latham and McCormack’s discussion on thinking spaces in fieldwork: ‘Following Perek, we can think of

these series of images as modes of inventorying and listing. As such, they simultaneously conjure the singularity of each individual thing, and, through repetition, the set of relations in which this thing is a participant' (Latham and McCormack 2009, p. 256). The way the images are arranged on the page, the loose invented categories and the 'playful' captions are partly based on artist Marjolijn Dijkman's publication *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (2011) and photographer Michael Wolf's book *Informal Solutions* (2016). This visual inventory depicts how allotment gardeners create new meanings and uses for everyday objects. Many of these interventions by allotment holders are prompted by a search for ways to help their crops grow, but I argue that this visual documentation shows that these new constellations exceed pure functionality, and thereby speak of the playfulness involved in the practice of gardening. In other words, it defies the logic of solving practical problems like the demarcation of plot borders or keeping birds away from the crops.

There are significant differences between the three gardening practices and the ways they enact these specific playful material engagements. At the allotment there is a plethora of material improvisations because there is a certain freedom afforded by the very fact that gardeners rent the plot: to a certain extent they can do what they want with their own plot. But the situation for the community garden is very different. Volunteers are guided in their practices by the managers of the garden space, who are concerned with both growing plants and creating a comfortable space for visitors to the garden. Furthermore, the guerrilla gardeners are limited in their doings by intense negotiations with other users of the urban spaces in which they intervene. Therefore, I have chosen to focus this photo-essay solely on allotment gardeners and their very specific creative material practices. Thus, my research approach here resembles that of a documentary photographer who attempts to capture particular scenes whilst being immersed in the topic and the local setting.

### *3.8 Choosing the Case Studies*

As much as this thesis is an ethnographic study, it is also a comparative study. I will discuss the concepts of play and work by analysing three urban gardening case studies, which I introduce further in this section. Comparison works in two main ways for this research. First, I compare

the gardening practices at the three case studies to identify the specific materialities, temporalities, spatialities and socialities enacted, as well as analysing what kinds of meanings are attributed to these forms of ‘urban gardening’—allotment gardening, community gardening and guerrilla gardening. Second, I understand comparison as a polymorphous engagement (Hannerz 2003) within these case studies. This involves analysing not only the physical spaces of gardening, but also news clippings and formal documents such as the ‘allotment holder agreement’ or the Hackney Council planning documents.

As I outlined in the previous chapter, there are several reasons why I have chosen to focus on allotment, community and guerrilla gardening practices. First of all, gardens are understood as secluded, sensual, bounded sites of play. However, gardens are also discussed by cultural geographers as being part of capitalism, as sites of work. Therefore, gardens provide fertile ground for exploring the complex enactments of play and work. Additionally, I have selected these particular gardening practices because allotment, community and guerrilla spaces are accessible to the public. This produces the challenge of negotiating social relations with others (human and nonhuman) who might be strangers. Differently to public parks, allotment, community and guerrilla garden spaces are mainly looked after by volunteers. This process of interaction between people, plants and creatures can inform discussion of play and work. Also, allotment, community and guerrilla gardening have different modes of organisation and entitlements to the land on which gardening happens. Allotment holders rent a plot for a small fee paid to the local council, cultivating it individually or in small groups of family or friends. Community garden volunteers make use of a shared space, managed by a social enterprise, with cultivation organised around collective Saturday afternoon sessions. Guerrilla gardens are neglected council planters or abandoned small patches of private land taken over by individuals or small groups of gardeners. Cultivation takes place without the initial consent of the authorities, and ‘digs’ (garden sessions) are either planned in advance and announced online or are spontaneous. These differences between the practices of gardening and the values attributed to it by gardeners can influence the ways in which notions of play and work are enacted.

In order to enhance the feasibility of this research, I decided early on to seek case studies within the same city. It is a challenge to manage three different case studies, as this means engaging with three different social spheres over a long period. I believed it would be much more feasible to do this within one city in the United Kingdom. Moreover, London provides a relevant case study for studying urban gardening practices and the blurred categories of play and work because, due to the increasing influence of the global financial market on London housing stock as well as local processes of gentrification, there is a shortage of affordable housing and people are continuously being pushed out of the areas where they live. Furthermore, large urban (re)developments such as the Kings Cross area or the Olympic Park tend to focus on providing commercial profits for a few private investors rather than creating a liveable city for all. These conditions create intense pressures on the city's green spaces. Cultivating urban gardens like allotment plots, community spaces and guerrilla patches seems to have become a precarious practice, and one that is possibly fully entangled with London's post-Fordist economy. Simultaneously, London has inherited a large number of allotment sites within its boundaries. Local councils all have waiting lists for these allotment sites, as they have surged in popularity in the last ten years. There are also many actively cultivated community gardens, either recently established (often of a temporary nature) or stemming from the 1970s and 1980s. In addition, London is home to guerrilla gardening groups that are very visible in terms of media coverage (Reynolds 2009, Harfleet 2016, Wheen 2016). The city has seen multiple (temporary) experiments in illicit gardening in urban spaces. To sum up, London provides a relevant and productive case study for investigating gardening practices and how they enact notions of play and work, due to its specific combination of intense and volatile post-Fordist economic conditions and a wide range of actively cultivated urban garden spaces.

### **3.8.1 Allotment Gardening Case Study**

The allotment case study site is 'Chitts Hill Allotment and Garden Society' in Wood Green, in the North London borough of Haringey. I visited several allotment sites in North London and found that this particular site would make a rich and relevant case study for this thesis. Haringey Council in North London has listed all its allotment sites, so I went through this list and

gathered information from colleagues and friends, as well as going on several cycle trips to visit and identify sites. In comparison to the other sites I considered, this allotment site has a long history, dating back to 1911, and is very large in size, with 201 plots. Most importantly it has a very diverse group of people cultivating allotment plots, which provided the potential to explore multiple encounters and the implications of a particular publicness of the garden. As this large allotment site is tucked away from the main street, it is barely visible to passers-by, while fences prevent people from just walking inside. The first time I paid a visit to the site, I simply waited for a long time at the closed entrance for an allotment gardener to arrive and asked permission to have a look around. On this first visit I spoke to the site secretary, and he introduced me to the site and some of its gardeners. After considering several other allotment sites in this part of London, I chose Chitts Hill as the case study because of the diversity of its gardeners, its seclusion and its clear boundaries. This held the potential for a variety of gardening practices and experiences to be explored. Once I had made this decision, I met with the site secretary to discuss the content of the research and what it would entail for the Chitts Hill Allotment Society. This was a positive meeting, in which he invited me to come along to the upcoming society committee meeting. This is the body that represents allotment holders, and it is responsible for running the site on a day to day business. I presented my research design at this meeting, and asked for permission to visit the site to talk and garden with allotment holders. I was granted permission at that meeting, meaning that I could undertake fieldwork at the Chitts Hill site.

### **3.8.2 Community Gardening Case Study**

For the community gardening case study, I chose to conduct research at the Eastern Curve community garden in Dalston, in the East London borough of Hackney. This garden space is run for the neighbourhood's residents by the Eastern Curve social enterprise. As I outlined in Chapter 1, the space was set up in July and August 2009 as a temporary art installation as part of the Barbican Art Gallery exhibition 'Radical Nature – Art and Architecture for a Changing Planet 1969-2009' (Horsfield 2010). J&L Gibbons and muf architecture/art introduced 'the Barbican Art Gallery team and the French group EXYZT as a site for the Dalston Mill – a 5

storey windmill and pizza oven along with a piece by the artist Agnes Denes' (J&L-Gibbons and Muf-architecture/art 2009, p. 86). This field of golden wheat was a mini version of Agnes Dene's 1982 work 'Wheatfield – a confrontation', which was planted on wasteland two blocks from Wall Street in Manhattan (Horsfield 2010, p. 1). According to muf architecture/art and J&L Gibbons, it 'has been an opportunity for both residents and LBH officers to experience...the potential of the Eastern Curve as a green host garden for the planned and unplanned' (J&L-Gibbons and Muf-architecture/art 2009, p. 86). Back in 2008, the former railway track site was boarded off and full of rubble, and funds from Design for London were used to clear the site (Ferreri 2014). muf architecture and J&L Gibbons had already initiated a design research project into the Dalston district and how it could be redeveloped, based on a series of open and creative workshops with local residents. The community group Open Dalston, of which the current Eastern Curve Garden local residents and garden co-ordinators were part, played an important role in these conversations. Open Dalston campaigned for the creation of open green spaces in the area that would be accessible to the public 7 days a week, and importantly would be managed open spaces, looked after by people appointed to do so. This process resulted in the publication of *Making Space in Dalston* (J&L-Gibbons and Muf-architecture/art 2009), which contained a list of 70 small and large urban design proposals, of which 5 were realised, the community garden being one (Ferreri 2014). EXYZT was commissioned to design and build the barn structure that provides shelter from the rain, space to sit and the kitchen for the café. The barn was built in a collaboration between EXYZT and local youth, and was finished in 2010. Landscape architects J&L Gibbons designed the garden and its planting, inserting birch trees and adding raised beds and a wooden path. This created the infrastructure, shape and texture of the community garden, which is now maintained and cultivated by the garden's co-ordinators. Since the start of the community garden, its existence has been uncertain because the land it cultivates is part owned by Hackney Council and part by the private owner of the Kingsland Shopping Centre, with the latter part due to be completely redeveloped into new buildings containing both retail and housing. Although set up as a temporary garden, the people involved in running the garden are committed to realising a permanent presence for the community garden.



The Eastern Curve Community Garden thus offers a complex and contested, temporary community garden case study. The current garden is the product of a process of grassroots campaigning from Open Dalston, innovative neighbourhood regeneration proposals by muf architecture/art and J&L Gibbons, a cultural initiative by Barbican Art Gallery, the collective design and building efforts of EXYZT and local youth, funding from the Mayor of London's office, and temporary provision of land by the London Borough of Hackney and the private owner of the Kingsland Shopping Centre. Currently run as a meeting place for people and plants, the Eastern Curve is open to the public seven days a week from 11am till dusk. It thus offers space for the local community to just drop in and pass time. The income generated by the café is used to maintain the garden and keep social activities running. A variety of activities take place at the Eastern Curve: garden volunteer sessions, music nights, creative workshops for children, weekly garden education sessions for the pupils of the local primary school and much more. The garden is also used as a children's play area and the café serves drinks and fresh food prepared on site. Dalston, where the Eastern Curve is located, used to be a deprived part of London, but it has been redeveloped rapidly and its urban fabric and economic and social composition has changed dramatically over the last ten years. The garden both resists and contributes to these wider social and spatial changes.

As this research focuses on the doing of gardening, on the embodied practices of cultivating green spaces in the city, the Eastern Curve Community Garden volunteer garden sessions are most relevant. Each Saturday afternoon, volunteers are invited to join in a collective garden session which is open to everyone. During these sessions people garden together, supervised by one of the garden co-ordinators. This provides an appropriate platform to investigate the enactment of notions of play and work while people garden, and offers the opportunity to dissect why people say they are involved. Simultaneously with the garden sessions, the community garden is visited by people from the neighbourhood, who come to spend time in the garden and maybe have a coffee. This creates a specific liveliness and a multiplicity of encounters. This was another argument for me to choose this particular community garden as a case study. I looked at other examples of community gardens in

London, some of which are only open to the public for very limited time frames each week, meaning that for the rest of the week only members with a key can access them. The liveliness and openness of the Eastern Curve Community Garden was thus an important factor influencing its choice as a case study, because it offered the opportunity to research multiple encounters and the garden's publicness (a concern of research subquestion three on encounters). I also looked at a community garden in London where the raised beds are assigned to individuals. This made the gardening a more socially fragmented practice, whereas I was interested in how people garden together and the potential social effects of this.

Negotiating access to the community garden was initially not an entirely smooth process. Although I could visit the garden every day, it was difficult to get hold of one of the very busy garden co-ordinators and sit down to discuss my research. Yet, after several failed attempts, I met with both garden co-ordinators, who were happy to participate in the research. During the fieldwork, I understood this initial hesitation more and more. The garden co-ordinators were first of all very occupied with just keeping the garden running, and secondly they had grown wary of requests by various individuals to include the garden in their research, magazine article, art project, commercial enterprise etc. Often these requests were not followed up, or the garden co-ordinator never saw the results of the collaboration. This also explains why halfway through my fieldwork, the garden co-ordinators expressed their appreciation of my long term engagement with the gardening volunteering sessions.

During the research, I discussed some of the preliminary research results in a meeting with the garden coordinator, and I also shared some of the images made during the fieldwork, which they used in their own yearly report. Furthermore, I agreed with community garden coordinators to produce a report summarising some of key insights from this research which are relevant for the community garden. I have made similar arrangements with the allotment site secretary.

### 3.8.3 Guerrilla Gardening Case Study

Unlike the two case studies described above, identifying a guerrilla gardening case study for this research was not as easy as locating a piece of urban land cultivated by a group of gardeners. To explore potential allotment and community gardening case studies I could visit physical sites, wait for a while and then speak to the people looking after the green spaces to see whether they would be happy to take part in the research. It was also less difficult for me to observe how frequently gardeners and visitors used those sites. Guerrilla gardening as a practice in London entails cultivating small pieces of land, dispersed over a neighbourhood, so it was more of a struggle to choose and negotiate access to guerrilla gardeners. However, it is precisely because of this more elusive character of guerrilla gardening that I have chosen to include it in this research. It provides a case study which is very distinct from the allotment and the community garden. For this comparative study, I will outline here the various guerrilla gardeners I have studied, spread across London, which together form the guerrilla gardening case study.

First of all, I participated in several ‘digs’ (guerrilla gardening sessions) organised by Richard Reynolds in the Elephant & Castle area of South London. Richard is one of the most well known guerrilla gardeners, as he actively pursues the visibility of his gardening practices in the local and international media. He is also the author of a handbook on guerrilla gardening (2009), and has set up an online platform for guerrilla gardeners to get in touch with each other. These ‘digs’ provided key insights for understanding how ideas of guerrilla gardening are performed, and to observe the wide range of people participating in a guerrilla gardening session promoted as part of a local art festival. Moreover, Richard has been gardening in several neglected council beds in the Elephant & Castle area for several years. For both its long term engagement and its public visibility this provided an interesting entry point into the practice of guerrilla gardening in London. I tried to follow up on the people I met at these Elefest digs to participate in their guerrilla gardening activities, but these gardeners were not responsive.

In order to find other examples of guerrilla gardening, I asked research participants, colleagues and friends for potentially interesting case studies. I also made use of online search

engines and posted several calls for participation in my research on the ‘Guerrilla Gardening London’ Facebook group and in the widely read ‘Community-Food-Growers’ newsletter. In addition, I took long walks along the canal in London to try to pin down some of the guerrilla gardeners active there. These attempts did not generate a large list of options, and some of the people I did contact never got back to me. But these various attempts generated the following research participants.

In the Facebook group ‘Guerrilla Gardening London’ I found a new group of guerrilla gardeners in Stamford Hill who had their own Facebook group called ‘Break-New-Ground’. I got in touch via that page, and I was invited to participate in their upcoming ‘dig’. This small group of six friends living around Stamford Hill had just started taking over some small raised beds, neglected by the council, and they had also planted stuff in an abandoned private front garden. They were active in the Stamford Hill area, and posted pictures of their efforts on their Facebook page. I participated in their dig in May 2014, and conducted a go-along with Monica, the ‘leading’ guerrilla gardener, in July 2014. But soon thereafter, the group stopped their short-lived efforts, so I sought out further cases of guerrilla gardening in London.

I obtained an account for the online academic website ‘Academia’, where I subscribed to a list of people interested in guerrilla gardening publications. On that forum, someone posted an audio-recording of a public event containing an interview with a guerrilla gardener active in South London. Through that, I found the online blog in which the gardener published about her garden activities. I contacted the gardener via e-mail, and she was happy for me to join her on a ‘dig’. I went with her on several digs, and also conducted a go-along with her. This guerrilla gardener looked after several neglected council beds in the area where she lived, as well as near her workplace—all in South London. She had been looking after some of the patches for several years already, and sometimes got help from friends and strangers happening to pass by. This provided the richest case study of guerrilla gardening for this research.

In addition, I got to know via a friend that a group of volunteers in Tower Hamlets were undertaking small guerrilla garden interventions along the canal. This group of volunteers meets monthly to remove rubbish from the canal in the Tower Hamlets area. As part of their

endeavours to clean the canal and make it more pleasant to spend time at, they plant flowers on patches along the banks. I conducted a go-along with the main initiators of this group of volunteers, but I could not join in with any of their gardening activities because these were delayed beyond the fieldwork period due to major works on the canal undertaken by the London Planning Department.

Another example of guerrilla gardening I studied is located in the area around Hornsey Park Road in the North London borough of Haringey. This is a group of local residents who have organised themselves as Parkside Malvern Residents Association. I found out about this group via an interview I held with one of the organisers of the Chelsea Garden fringe festival, who advised me to get in contact with one of its active members, Karin. I conducted a go-along with Karin, in which she talked about and showed me the multiple small green spaces the group has created in neglected council planters and small pieces of private land. Likewise, I conducted a go-along with Jackie, one of the co-ordinators of the Caravan Serai community garden in the East London borough of Newham, who replied to a call I had put out in the 'Community Food Growers' newsletter. Besides her activities in the community garden, Jackie also plants seeds along her everyday cycle routes in London. She talked me through her planting activities along the canal and her encounters with other small interventions along the water.

Hence, due to the challenges of tracking down guerrilla gardeners in London, I assembled several smaller groups and individuals who are active in London. Together, these research participants form the case study of guerrilla gardening. This differs from the more straightforward, singular case studies of allotment and community gardening that I have outlined above. Yet, the particular combination of guerrilla gardeners discussed provides a productive data set to gain insight into the practice, and offers the opportunity to compare it to allotment and community gardeners' practices and experiences. Furthermore, I argue that the more challenging process of choosing and researching the guerrilla gardening case study provides evidence of the more elusive, ephemeral, illicit attributes of this form of urban gardening. Unlike the allotment and community garden cases, guerrilla garden patches are usually not cultivated or visited on a daily basis. Also, 'a' guerrilla garden tends to be

distributed over several physical sites, in contrast to the enclosed spaces of the allotment and community garden. One can accidentally bump into guerrilla gardeners digging in a patch along the road, yet it is more complicated to plan to meet with guerrilla gardeners. At least this is what I have experienced in this particular research process.

### 3.9 Ethics

Before conducting fieldwork, I applied for an ethical review of the research from the Open University Human Research Ethics Committee. They gave a favourable opinion, reference no. HREC/2013/1554/Duppen/1.

During the fieldwork, I ensured that at every first encounter with participants, I informed them about my research and attempted to obtain their consent, making use of the consent form. This form outlined the topic of the research, its aims and its benefits and detailed what participation in the research involved and how the gathered data would be used. In addition, it contained contact details for the university and one of my supervisors (see Appendix C). The information and consent form also included a list of statements that research participants had to respond to by ticking yes or no boxes. I outline some of these questions here:

- I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I do not have to give any reasons why I no longer want to take part.
- I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs.
- I hereby give permission that images in which I appear may be used in *non-web based* research outputs, such as presentations at conferences, academic publications, and research reports.
- I hereby give permission that images in which I appear may be used in *online* research outputs, such as web pages, online publications, and research reports.

(See Appendix C for the whole list)

I always had two copies of the information and consent form, which I asked research participants to read, and when they were happy to participate in the research, sign, returning one

to me and keeping one for themselves. This information and consent form provided clarity for both researcher and research participant about what the research and participating in it would entail. I used it for participants in the go-along as well as for the garden coordinators.

Participants could withdraw consent up to three months after the end of data collection. If any participants had withdrawn their consent, their data would have been destroyed. This did not happen.

Anonymity and visual methods are a complex and debated field (Rose 2016, pp. 360–361). In this particular case I have not made individuals depicted in images anonymous, but rather obtained informed consent from people who appear identifiable in the images. Using cameras during fieldwork can occasionally cause friction. I therefore always made sure that I had either written or verbal consent from the gardeners photographed. Furthermore, I obtained permission to carry out photography in the gardens from the allotment's site secretary and committee, the community garden coordinators and the guerrilla gardeners involved. When using photography, I always underlined the specific purposes of the research and made the role of photography in the research clear. Additionally, I operated my camera carefully, seeking eye contact with participants, showing them the pictures and discussing them.

Given the distinctiveness of the research sites, I have decided not to try to make them anonymous. However, all research participants have been made anonymous during the writing up of this thesis, and all gardeners have been given fictitious names. As I have not concealed the gardens' locations, the garden coordinators might be identifiable because I have written about their distinct roles. I have discussed this with these particular individuals, and obtained their explicit consent to use this data.

### *3.10 Analysis and writing-up*

The research methods have generated a diverse set of data: go-along transcripts, interview transcripts, field notes, photographs and paper documents on the case studies (zines, maps, planning documents, council reports and legislation). This is a comparative study, and this fact

is reflected in the analysis I have conducted. I have attempted to make sense of these different sorts of data in conjunction with each other, the materials informing each other.

For the photo-essays, I made use of the Adobe Bridge software package to organise the photographs I took during the fieldwork, which enabled me to attach labels and time stamps to the images. I uploaded the go-along transcripts and field notes into the qualitative data analysis software tool MAXQDA (similar to the Vivo software packages). I analysed the transcripts to identify themes and patterns in the data (an open-coding process – Corbin and Strauss 2008). The codes used were shaped by the research questions, but were also informed by the data generated (the coding list can be found in Appendix D). I initially made use of hard copy transcripts to highlight text and jot down codes in the margins. Through a process of re-reading the transcripts, I tagged pieces of text to particular codes and developed themes by thinking through the relations between the codes. Hand drawings of maps and diagrams supported the process of making ‘sense’ of the chaos in the data gathered (Crang and Cook 2007). This was an iterative process, which was also guided by my research questions. Thereafter, I put these codes and notes into the MAXQDA software tool. To be clear, this coding process was conducted entirely by me as a researcher. The software programme provided an infrastructure for tagging and assembling the information, but it did not generate codes or analysis by itself.

Furthermore, I understand the analysis of data to be an integral part of this thesis, starting from the very beginning of the research. To carry out analysis encompasses discussing literature, developing research questions, choosing methods, writing field-notes etc. Thus, I have analysed the go-along transcripts, field notes and images to identify themes, patterns and relations both within and between the sets of data. The codes used were shaped by the research questions, but were also informed by the data generated. This process generated specific ‘themes’ which have shaped the writing. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are structured according to the research questions.

To sum up, I have outlined the ethnographic approach of this thesis and discussed the potential and limitations of the research methods used: participant observation, go-alongs, semi-structured interviews, archival work and photography. I have also set out the process of



choosing and getting access to the case studies and reflected upon the ethical implications of this research. This section on analysis and writing up leads in to the start of the ‘second’ part of this thesis, which will analyse the data gathered in relation to the literature and research questions set out in Chapter 2. Photo-essay A, on ‘getting your hands dirty’ comes next.

## Photo-essay A. Getting your hands dirty

*'I love dirty hands! I love!'* This is how allotment gardener Maria expresses her enthusiasm for cultivating her allotment plot. Her outcry of love for hard physical garden work reverberates with other urban gardeners' talk: of the *'fun of getting your hands dirty'* (Zeynep, community gardener); *'well it's kind of ... cathartic'* (James, community gardener); *'I love the sense of digging until I'm exhausted'* (Jasna, allotment gardener); *'well there is labour involved, but it doesn't feel like work'* (Lisa, guerrilla gardener). This photo-essay takes a closer look at how urban gardeners understand the corporeality and materiality of their urban gardening practices through a visual exploration of this frequently uttered phrase: *'getting your hands dirty'*. Participants referred to the idiom's meaning of doing hard manual work as well as to its literal meaning of grubby, muddy hands. The following set of images 'evokes' (Rose 2008, p. 155) these corporealities of doing hard work and the materialities of working with soil, animals and plants. I attempt to 'animate' (Vannini 2014, p. 3) the life-worlds of allotment, community and guerrilla gardeners. Furthermore, I begin to unpack the complex relations between notions of play and work as enacted through the manual practices of gardening. The images attempt to get at the feel of weeding, watering and harvesting, and explore the performed bodily gestures. Additionally, images are used to 'convey the qualities of materiality' (Rose 2008, p. 155) of gardening practices. These images zoom in on the forms and textures of hands, soil, plants and animals.



















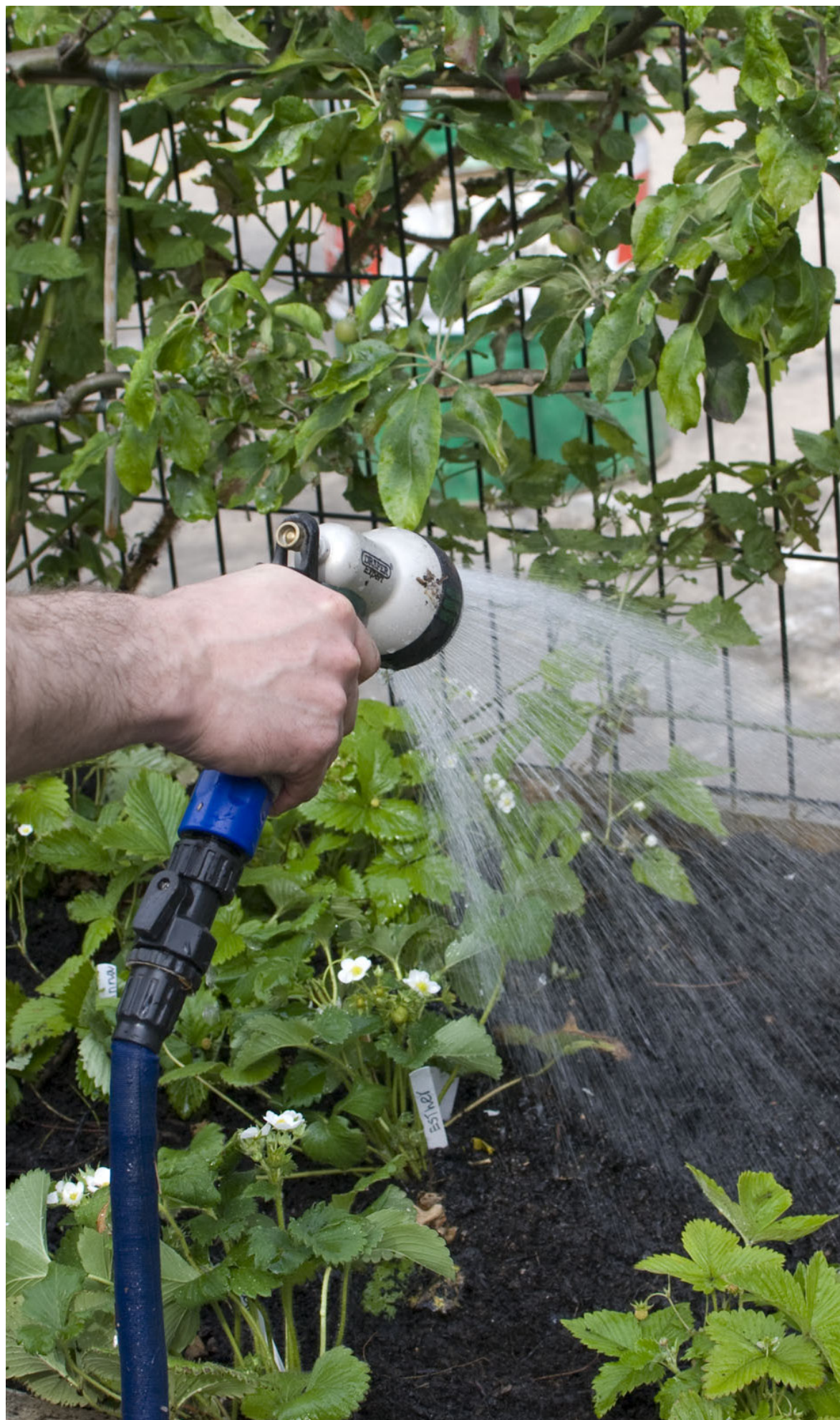














































## Chapter 4. Why do people garden? Enjoying, achieving, and volunteering

In the previous chapters, I have discussed theories of the relation between notions of play and work, reviewed the work of cultural geographers on urban gardening, introduced the research methods and reflected upon doing ethnographies. We now arrive at the part of the thesis where I discuss the empirical material and argue how this addresses the main research question: *How do different urban gardening practices enact the relation(s) between play and work?*

In this chapter, I answer my first sub-question: *why do people garden?* This question focuses specifically on how research participants understand and talk about gardening, and we will see that people's reasons for gardening are a complex mix of the qualities ascribed to both work and play. The three main reasons participants give for being involved in gardening are enjoying, achieving and volunteering, which are each explored in turn in the sections which follow. First, I take a closer look at the multi-sensory experience of the garden and its visceral enjoyments; second, I outline how urban gardeners get a sense of achievement from their practices; and third, I unpack the notion of being voluntarily involved in gardening. I shed light on gardeners' struggles to make time for gardening, their hard work to maintain gardens and the social and institutional obligations they feel. Thus, this chapter discusses the themes of enjoyment, achievement and volunteering which are ascribed to gardening, and thereby explores the relations between play and work.

### 4.1 Enjoying

In the following, I build upon and extend the notion of the embodiment of gardening depicted in Photo-essay A, *Getting your hands dirty*. This section discusses how participants talk about enjoying the multi-sensory experience of their gardening practice, and thereby explores the affective intensity and fun of these embodied practices, qualities which Huizinga and Caillois

ascribe to play. Furthermore, I unpack how gardeners set up clear distinctions between their paid work and their visceral gardening experience.

#### 4.1.1 'Being outdoors' and doing 'backbreaking work'

In this research, participants were asked about why they garden and what they specifically enjoy about their practice. Gardeners often talk about the intense embodied experience of gardening, saying that they value this hard physical work, finding it enjoyable.

For instance, gardeners express enjoyment at being in the fresh open air, while they often draw comparisons with their paid work environment. For example, community gardener Megha qualifies her '*air conditioned office*'<sup>1</sup> as '*the complete opposite of being out in a garden*', while allotment gardener Paul says, '*It's the sense of just being out in the fresh air, because I work in an office*'. Allotment gardener Julia makes a similar observation: '*The thing that I like most about it is that it is outdoors... whereas I normally sit in an office*'. These research participants describe the difference between their paid workplaces and the garden as the latter having '*fresh air*' and being '*green*' (Julia, allotment gardener). Gardeners see being '*surrounded by so much greenery*' (Lilly, community gardener) as a positive. Often the comparison between the spaces of the office and the garden include the phrase '*being sat at a desk*' (Barry, guerrilla gardener). This act of sitting is qualified as something undesirable and passive, and the garden is seen as the opposite of that.

In this respect, gardeners talk about the joy of physical work in the garden, of feeling themselves getting carried away in performing repetitive movements such as weeding or digging. These '*cathartic*' (James, community gardener) practices are often seen as enjoyable. Community gardener Arthur actively seeks out such tasks: '*Well, what I do is choose the tasks which I'm good at, which is persistence and focus on actual tasks. That makes a difference. That's what I like*'. Allotment gardener Allan also expresses joy in doing this type of garden work: '*It's surprising, the small things are the most important things, like hoeing, weeding...leaning on a stick with a bit of metal on the end just going "ch ch ch ch ch"*'.

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<sup>1</sup> In order to make participants' words stand out from the text, I have opted to put them in italics.

*Fantastic!*’ This suggests that the simple, repetitive physical movements involved produce a particular embodied experience that is seen as one of the main reasons for gardening.

In addition, research participants repeatedly articulate that they seek to exhaust their bodies whilst gardening. For example, community gardener Megha appreciates the ‘*backbreaking work*’ of removing bindweed in the garden. Likewise, allotment gardener Paul enjoys the hard physical work, even though his ‘*back might be sore*’, and allotment gardener Jasna enjoys ‘*digging until I’m exhausted*’. Here, research participants refer to their bodies being tested by the physical activity; gardening is experienced as exercise. Community gardener Arthur summarises this neatly: ‘*And when I come here, it’s a bit like a workout. If you think about last week, I was really sore after it. Look at my blisters.*’ These accounts thus demonstrate that research participants derive pleasure from testing their bodies in the garden.

Moreover, some gardeners describe this embodiedness not just as enjoyable, but also as contributing to their mental well-being. For instance, guerrilla gardener Lisa and her friends call their practice ‘*gardening therapy...it is intelligible...you know...I really don’t what it is. It’s something about the physical activity that just feels right. Just cultivation*’. Lisa’s difficulty in finding words to express the bodily effects of gardening resonate with Rose’s suggestion that corporealities ‘are on the edge of being articulable’ (2003, p. 49). Another example of the therapeutic effects of gardening is given by allotment gardener Allan: ‘*And it’s just for pleasure, relaxation, and certainly in the last four years my mental wellbeing definitely. If I didn’t have the garden and the allotment to look after I think I wouldn’t be in a very good position now. I would be watching the telly all the time and...*’ Allan believes having an allotment plot has helped him recover from the severe back injury that forced him out of paid work. Thus, urban gardeners sometimes link their physical work in the garden with the nurturing of their mental wellbeing. They believe that the exercise helps to relieve the stress of their everyday lives as well as keeping their bodies moving.

In the above, research participants highlight the embodiedness of their gardening practices. They qualify being outdoors in the garden and doing repetitive backbreaking work as something enjoyable, distinct from their paid work environment, while some gardeners also

point out the positive effect it has on their mental well-being. These descriptions of physical exhaustion and repetitive bodily movements resonate with Degen et al.'s study of urban natures, in which they observe that 'routine corporeal engagements help gardeners learn to be affected' (2010, p. 71). Furthermore, gardeners' descriptions allude to the affective intensity of play as theorised by Huizinga (1950). This produces a paradoxical relation between play and work, as the hard physical 'work' in the garden is perceived by gardeners as a form of play. Next, I discuss the visual experience of the garden.

#### 4.1.2 'Seeing things grow'

Another reason given by participants for being involved in gardening is 'seeing things grow', referring to the multi-sensory exploration of the garden and its plants. Allotment gardener Quino puts it simply: *'I like to see things grow man. That's the main thing. Just seeing it from seed'*. Allotment gardener Robert also vividly describes the beauty of seeing things grow. During my go-along with him, he showed me some leek seedlings sitting in the top corner of his greenhouse in a small planter. He was smiling as he bent over and gently touched the leaves: *'I absolutely love...the leek seedlings...the way they sort of grow, when they come out...and sort of bend over. And then as they grow they sort of open out'*. Another gardener who appreciates the growth of plants is guerrilla gardener Jackie, who speaks of a certain 'magic', stating: *'there's nothing more beautiful than seeing a little crack in a pavement and these little flowers popping out'*. Jackie thus describes being captivated by the magic of seeing the growth of plants, portraying the particular sensibility of a guerrilla gardener looking out for plants in the everyday urban fabric. Allotment gardener Julia also evokes this sense of surprise. During a go-along, she pointed to a courgette plant, calling it *'our joke courgette'*. She explained that she and her partner were letting that particular courgette grow without harvesting it *'just to see what happens'*. Julia thus wanted to explore how large the plant could grow, making it into a small game with her partner. These descriptions by gardeners demonstrate how they are captivated and enchanted by following the growth of plants in the garden. In Bennett's (2001) words, these gardeners are 'struck and shaken by the extraordinary that lives amid the familiar and the everyday' (in Holloway 2006, p. 186). This enchantment and captivation expresses Caillois and

Huizinga's notion of play, as discussed in Chapter 2. Moreover, these ethnographic descriptions reverberate with Ginn's (2017) observation that without the unsettling unpredictability of plants there would be no enchantment. Gardeners find themselves in a state of 'certain uncertainty' (2017, p. 218), which makes being part of the growth of plants all the more exciting. Again, I identify a notion of play here; the 'tension and uncertainty to the outcome' (Huizinga 1950, p. 47) makes it an exciting and fun practice.

Some urban gardeners are quite active in documenting and indexing plants and their growth. For community gardener Samantha, this has to do with the visual enjoyment of the garden. Whilst gardening, mesmerised by the flower produced by the artichoke plant, she took out her smart phone to photograph the flower so she could revisit it and show it to her friends. Guerrilla gardener Monica is quite self-conscious about the practice of making images of her gardening interventions. During the go-along she commented on my intention to photograph the bed of plants: *'Is it worthy of being photographed? I don't know! (Laughs) Oh look there's actually a pea shoot. Wow! Two! They are definitely – oh three look! They are worthy of being photographed'*. Monica assessed the state of growth of the plants, and confirmed that they were worth photographing. When I asked her about the role of photography in her guerrilla gardening practice, she replied: *'Yeah well it's nice to see the progress or – yeah, it's nice to see the changes in a way you know? So – yeah so we've always kind of done before and during and after, and also that's for the Facebook page'*. Thus, making images is a way of documenting the work that the guerrilla gardeners have put in, the before and after image, while it also documents the growth of the plants. It is also a means for them to circulate and promote their garden practice online, on the Facebook social media website. Another manifestation of self-archiving is the practice of keeping a diary of the varieties of plants gardeners have spotted in the garden. Community gardeners James and Sofia both have their own notebooks for indexing types of wild flowers that they spot in the garden. Lastly, some allotment gardeners keep meticulous accounts of dates and locations for the crops they grow on their plots. This serves a practical purpose, as it allows them to rotate their crops efficiently. They argue that crop rotation keeps the soil healthy, and thus also brings better growth results.



Although these research participants document and index the growth of their plants for fun, which resonates with ideas of play, this practice of detailed and routinised mapping of plant growth also brings to the fore an element of work. Thus, I have shown how gardeners are captivated and enchanted by seeing plants grow, which alludes both to the idea of play and to how the careful documentation and indexing of the growth of plants involves work.

#### **4.1.3 ‘It smells like pineapple’ and ‘we’re just snacking on them’**

From sights to textures, smells and tastes, I found that gardeners enjoyed exploring the garden and its plants through their senses. Participants talked in various ways about the textures of the garden, for example the joy of touching the soil. Allotment gardener Robert lets the soil slip through his fingers, identifying it thus: *‘That’s sort of old-style soil...this is sort of what we’ve got to. Although it is...it is sort of, it’s still clay in there. So, it still gets very sticky.’* Through this touching, Robert gains knowledge about his allotment plot. He concludes from this dive into the soil that it is for a large part made out of clay, which will dry and crack with the dry weather in the summer. Community gardener Neil argues that the soil has therapeutic qualities, and he enjoys gardening without his gloves on. But there is also the unpleasantness of touching snails and slugs, and amongst the participants disgusted by this is Lilly: *‘yeah I don’t mind the snails but I really don’t like the slugs; they’re disgusting, I don’t want to touch them’* (Lilly, community gardener).

Besides disgust, there is also the texture of fruit and vegetables blossoming. Touching the fruit’s skin, pressing for sturdiness, can give crucial information about ripeness. Picking figs from the tree at the back of his plot, allotment gardener Allan explains:

*Jan: So, you know when it’s ripe, because you need to feel it, how soft it is?*

*Allan: Yeah. Nice and soft.*

*Jan: And then you know it’s ready?*

*Allan: Yes.*

*Jan: And the colour?*

*Allan: Yeah these ones. Do you feel that one, how hard that is?*

*Jan: Yes. But it's already dark.*

*Allan: Yeah.*

*Jan: So, the colour is not so important, because this is a bit green, or not?*

*Allan: Yeah. Well, same here. It's the softness. But these in the shops at the moment: one pound each.*

The above shows that textures sometimes need to be assessed before fruit is picked, which again highlights the tactility of gardening. In short, touch plays a role in assessing the qualities of soil and fruit, but it also entails the enjoyment of exploring the materialities of the garden space. This exemplifies Crouch's (2003a) notion of embodied doings and feelings in the creative act of gardening. This tactile exploration also speaks to Caillois' continuum of ways of playing, ranging from *ludus*, or the development of technique and skill, of institutionalisation and repletion, to *paidia*, describing improvisation, unstructured, ephemeral and tactile exploration, which is relevant here (Caillois 1961, p. 30).

I develop further this notion of unstructured exploration of the garden through the senses. During go-alongs, I was often invited to smell plants and other things in the garden. For gardeners, this is an ordinary thing to do; it is part of their understanding of these green spaces. We would smell plants and talk about their names. For example, Lilly mentions pineapple sage, which surfaced in many of the go-alongs with community gardeners:

*Lilly: And I remember this in particular – the pineapple sage, I never even knew something like that existed and I thought it was – it blew my mind.*

*Jan: But how does it smell then?*

*Lilly: It smells like pineapple, yeah. So every time I come here I show it to somebody, because I think nobody will know about it and nobody has known about it and – yeah I really like it.*

Lilly is very enthusiastic about the pineapple sage, it 'blew her mind' when she first smelled it. Several other community gardeners also pointed out and talked about this particular bush, all mentioning the very intense smell, which they like to experience and share with others.

Yet, unpleasant smells are also encountered whilst exploring the garden through the senses. Community gardener Sofia recalls the smell of beer cans, while community gardener Zeynep dislikes the smell of barbecued meat coming from a market stall next to the garden site. Allotment gardener Jasna warned me before I put my nose into a bucket full of ‘*comfrey*’, which has an intense, rich, earthy smell, and which is overpowering for those who are not used to it. This is a self-made natural fertiliser, which several allotment gardeners make use of. Hence, smell plays a part in improvised sensorial explorations of the garden.

The garden landscape is not only explored playfully through the hands and nose, but also through the mouth. I found that urban gardeners enjoyed eating their produce straight from the plant, tasting it while standing, walking or sitting in their garden space. On many go-alongs, I was invited to taste produce straight from the tree, bush or plant. At the allotment site, Jasna shared some raspberries, Maria an apricot, Allan freshly picked figs, Jim several varieties of grapes, Julia raspberries and Sue green beans. Allotment gardener Jim is enthusiastic about the wide variety of grapes he grows:

*This one is called Himrot. This is the seedless white one. This is one is...is the strawberry grape. This is another hybrid. And this one, I don't know if they are ready. Oh, yeah, well maybe...yeah...you see why it is called that.*

He let me try the Fragalia variety, which was very tasty, both sweet and tangy. Allotment gardener Julia shared some spring raspberries during the go-along:

*Julia: Again, we don't really have enough for a proper meal. So, I just come and eat like five at a go.*

*Jan: You're snacking.*

*Julia: Yeah, we're just snacking on them. Here you go.*

*Jan: Thanks. They are nice.*

*Julia: Yeah, they are nice, aren't they. I feel a bit bad, because Ben never eats them. Because I just eat them always.*

In the above, Julia expresses that she feels guilty because her husband does not eat any raspberries. When she is there, she just eats them straight from the bush, and most importantly, as the bushes are not fully grown they do not produce many raspberries, which is why she just eats five at a time: a little snack in the allotment garden.

It was slightly different at the community garden, as none of us ‘owned’ the plants. Still, community gardener Megha tasted nasturtium for the first time during the go-along:

*Megha: Shall I give it a go? Like the whole flower?*

*Jan: Yeah, you can also wash it if you want. Not the whole plant.*

*Megha: Okay, I think all the bugs are off this one. There’s a nice texture. It kind of tastes like I’m eating ... ooh, now I can taste the peppery bit!*

Megha is surprised by the peppery taste of the flower and excited to taste the nasturtium in the middle of the garden. It inspires her to think about adding the flowers to a green salad, that adding the orange to the green leaves would look nice. Another community gardener talks more secretly about eating some of the produce whilst volunteering. During the go-along, Neil whispered: ‘*Last week, we had to pick stuff for the first time, which was really nice. And I ate some stuff, but don’t tell anyone*’. This alludes to a certain naughtiness involved in snacking on a plant’s produce. Neil feels that he was not supposed to eat the raspberries straight away, but being tempted he did so. For guerrilla gardeners this snacking from the plant is less relevant, as most gardeners in this research do not plant things with the intention of eating them, because they did not trust the publicly accessible soil to be safe to eat from. Yet, guerrilla gardener Monica recalls finding plum trees: ‘*...we went up the canal towards like Tottenham Marshes, so kind of from here to Tottenham Hill, and discovered all these wild plum trees in Tottenham Marshes – amazing!*’ Thus, Monica ate straight from the tree, not within the confines of the garden space, but out on the street.

During go-alongs, the shared moment of tasting fruit and vegetables together prompted talk about different plant varieties and their tastes. We talked about the differences with supermarket fruit and vegetables and recalled memories of previous tastes. I have not yet

discussed the multiple generous gifts I received during the fieldwork, and I cooked many meals from the vegetables given to me by gardeners, while my window sill was full of seedlings gifted by gardeners. However, I want to highlight here the specific act of eating straight from the plant. I recognise an immediacy and a site-specificity in this practice. This immediacy, this ephemeral, unstructured moment, evokes play. Moreover, some gardeners feel naughty when snacking from the plant, as the produce is either meant for the whole household or for sharing with other volunteers. This feeling of being naughty can also be understood as ‘cheating’, as only pretending to play the game (Huizinga 1950, p. 11).

Thus, this discussion has brought to the fore how participants explore the garden through their senses: rubbing and smelling leaves, touching figs and snacking on raspberries. This way of being in the garden confirms Caillois’ ideas about a specific way of playing, which he calls *paidia*. I deploy Caillois’ conception of *paidia* to show how gardeners spend time in the garden in an unstructured, ephemeral, tactile mode of exploration. Getting to know the garden, and enjoying its surprises and liveliness, happens through the senses.

#### **4.1.4 Summary**

In the above, I have discussed the intense bodily effects of gardening, with participants being enchanted by the garden’s liveliness and engaging in an unstructured, ephemeral mode of exploring the garden through the senses. Participants talked about being outdoors and doing backbreaking work. They were smelling leaves, hearing birds and tasting produce picked straight from the tree. I would like to synthesise these accounts of the enjoyment of gardening as a visceral experience. It is as if people feel more alive in the garden, their senses are opened up, textures are explored, colours absorbed, smells inhaled. These findings resonate with and extend the writings of cultural geographers Degen et al. (2010) on the fleshiness of engaging with urban natures, Crouch (2010a) on gardening as a creative act, Ginn’s (2017) conception of certain uncertainty in the garden and Bhatti et al. (2009) on enchanted encounters enacted in the garden. Furthermore, these moments of embodied captivation produced in urban gardening practices confirm the enchanting, absorbing qualities of play as described by Huizinga (1950).

In addition, participants often contrasted the visceral garden experience with their jobs, and thereby highlighted that the materialities and sensualities of their paid work are different to those of their gardening practices. However, this section has also shown two notions of work being enacted in the garden: work on indexing plant growth and the intense repetitive bodily movements of garden work. I will explore this ambiguity of play and work relations further in the next section.

## *4.2 Achieving*

In this section, I discuss the various kinds of achievement that gardeners attribute to the practice of gardening, all of which closely relate to the idea of ‘productivity’. I thereby explore Caillois’ understanding of play as unproductive and Huizinga’s claim that it is non-instrumental, as discussed in Chapter 2. I outline these forms of achievement in the following order: first seeing the fruits of your efforts, next harvesting fruit and vegetables and finally acquiring knowledge and social contacts that can be used in paid work.

### **4.2.1 ‘Seeing the fruits of your efforts’**

Research participants frequently talk about seeing the fruits of their (collective) efforts, and the sense of achievement that this gives them. They describe their practice of returning to the garden after a few days to observe how it looks and see how the plants have grown. I found that allotment, community and guerrilla gardeners all derive pleasure from observing what has been created. Community gardener Bagpuss vividly evokes this particular feeling of achievement:

*A few weeks ago, we were cutting the bushes. You know, it’s quite laborious work. And then you look back, and you feel so like, ‘gosh’. Not just immediately. But you come a few days later: ‘my God, we did that!’ Like we did the orchids a few weeks ago. Well, about two months ago. We did orchids all around the chair at the top there. You know? ...And it looks so beautiful when it’s finished. Those things only last a few days. So you take a picture of it. ‘Gosh, I’ve done that’. And you just feel like: ‘Wow, we’ve created something beautiful today’. And as I said, that’s that sense of achievement,*

*because you are creating and you're learning at the same time.*

Bagpuss points towards the 'collective effort' of gardening. Arthur, another community gardener, also talks about shared aims and efforts: *'Well, I think it's a creative sort of thing, because working in a garden, doing the lawn, weeding beds, you know, makes a garden better. And if our aim is to have a garden which attracts visitors through the way it looks, that's what it's all about, isn't it?'* This shows the importance of the aesthetics of the community garden, and that this provides a sense of achievement for these particular community gardeners. Their collective practices are about creating a visually attractive space rather than producing vegetables and fruits to eat. This notion of 'creating' an appealing space is confirmed by the community garden coordinator: *'I'm always happiest when all of the volunteers are here. And we're gardening and it is very productive...and then seeing things growing, making the garden more and more lovely, creating a lovely environment for people'* (Aoife, community garden coordinator). Thus, like many other gardeners I spoke to, Aoife derives happiness in gardening from achievement, from creating a visually pleasant garden space.

This notion of joy in seeing the fruits of one's efforts was not limited to the community gardeners I researched, but also held true for guerrilla gardeners like Lisa: *'Also the effect is great! It does look so so much better! And it is really nice to see. To see particularly the...patch really take off'*. Lisa's guerrilla interventions were not aimed at producing fruit and vegetables, but rather at introducing a different kind of planting in neglected council beds. Her sense of achievement is derived from diversifying the type of plants in these neglected council beds and looking after them. Similarly to these community and guerrilla gardeners, the allotment gardeners I engaged with also appreciated standing back and looking at the fruits of their efforts. For instance, Allan describes this particular sense of achievement: *'When you go back each day in the evening you can see that the plants have grown and see that there's produce growing, it's actually really fascinating. I love it'*. To sum up, urban gardeners get a sense of achievement from seeing how their garden work has changed the garden space. They talk about the pleasure of coming back to the garden to see how plants have grown, and how they have played a part in creating that bit of the garden.

#### 4.2.2 The pleasure of harvesting fruit and vegetables

This section identifies another form of achievement enacted by gardening practices. Gardeners talk about getting a sense of achievement when they harvest, display and consume the fruit and vegetables they have grown. The following vignette from the fieldwork about allotment gardener Paul and his display of the potato harvest illustrates the pleasure of harvesting fruit and vegetables:

*It's September, harvest time, and I'm joining the community barbecue at the allotment site. A selection of this year's produce grown by allotment holders is presented on two large white tables in the 'trading shed'. A large part of the table is occupied by the potatoes grown by Paul, an allotment holder who is also the site secretary. I ask him about the potatoes on display, and he tells me enthusiastically about each variety, how to best prepare it and what its origins are. Paul gives rich descriptions of how one variety is best suited for baking in the oven and one is better for making chips, while another goes well in salads. In Paul's talk and in the way the potatoes are displayed I can sense a clear joy and pride in how he has put this exhibition together. All the potatoes have been cleaned thoroughly and then put carefully in little piles on paper plates. Each plate has a hand written note on it, stating the variety (see Figure 8).*

This exhibition provides evidence of Paul's sense of pride in producing vegetables. Seventeen potato varieties are displayed, all grown in one season without additional watering. Paul is keen to show the rest of the allotment community what he has grown, and moreover he wants to convince the other allotment holders that potatoes can be grown without additional watering. While this contributes to Paul's own sense of achievement, he also tries to change his fellow allotment holders' gardening practices. He wants to encourage them to take better care of the environment by using less water, which would also reduce the allotment site's water bill. Most importantly, the way this exhibition has been put together and the enthusiasm in Paul's voice as he talks about it signify the 'fun' he experiences from the harvest feast. However, Paul also employs this 'fun' to influence the wider environment of the allotment, thereby transcending play by introducing a hint of instrumentality.





**Figure 8 Display of potatoes grown by Paul**

*The text written on the white plates reads as follows, from top left to bottom right: Kerr's Pink (Early Main), Lady Crystal, Red Duke of York, Pentland Javelin, Salad Blue, Charlotte Salad, Nicola (Salad), Salad Anya, Mayan Gold (Early Main), Desiree (Main), Arran Victory (Main), King Edward (Main), Kestrel (Second Early), Picasso (Main), Cara (Main), Blue Danube (Hungarian, Blight Resistant), Sarpo Mira (Main) Blight Resistant (Hungarian).*

Finally, tasting the potatoes he has grown himself gives Paul a specific sense of achievement, as he explained in a conversation I had with him later:

*It's an incomparable flavour you can't get anywhere else, that you can get from growing your own potatoes. We have never bought a shop potato since we started back in 1996. Yeah, we did and we were very, very disappointed. It was just a watery mush compared to our own fully flavoured and full of texture home grown potatoes.*

As he outlines in the above quote, this is about differences in the taste and texture of the potato. Here the allotment holder claims to produce better quality food than commercial farmers. According to Paul, these potato varieties are simply not on offer at the supermarket. I have to note here that Paul is almost completely self-sufficient. His two allotment plots provide him with all the fruit and vegetables necessary throughout the whole year. This not only exemplifies how committed and skilled Paul is in growing produce, but also shows the fun and sense of achievement he derives from harvesting what he grows himself. One conditions the other, thus work and play become more difficult to separate in this example.

Although Paul falls into the category of a very keen, almost professional gardener, other allotment holders also talk at length and in depth about the pleasures of harvesting and eating the fruits and vegetables they have grown themselves. For instance, Robert talks about enjoying the freshness of the produce, while Usain mentions that '*one day you're going to take that, reap it. And when you plant corn, you might leave some corn, and you dry it. And you get it to plant the following year*'. Maria shared a detailed recipe with me for preparing dolmades with the vine leaves she had just given me. Fruit and vegetables were not the only things being harvested by allotment holders. Martha, for example, talked about the joy of growing and cutting pea flowers. She found it '*somehow so satisfying*' to bring home a bunch of self-grown allotment flowers. It must be noted, however, that not all allotment holders attribute equal importance to their harvest. Jasna reflects on achieving things in the garden: '*I don't really mind if I'm not particularly successful at gardening...it's about the doing rather than the end result*'. Although Jasna measures her achievements differently, she gets a similar sense of achievement by other means. Still, this research has found less evidence for community and guerrilla gardeners' sense

of achievement from harvesting and tasting their own produce. Thus, for some urban gardeners, the end result, the produce harvested, is of less relevance. Nonetheless, this section has shown that allotment gardeners in particular derive a sense of achievement from harvesting and eating their produce, which runs counter to the ‘unproductivity’ of play as theorised by Huizinga and Caillois.

#### **4.2.3 Producing knowledge and social contacts useful for paid work**

While the previous two sections discussed more or less tangible manifestations of achievement in the garden, this section sheds light on some of the more intangible results of practicing gardening described by research participants. I discuss four examples of how, whilst gardening, participants produce knowledge and social contacts that can be used in their paid work.

First, guerrilla gardener Monica briefly looked after a couple of spots in the North London area of Stamford Hill. As part of her five month stint of guerrilla gardening, she started a Facebook page for her group of gardening friends, documenting the guerrilla ‘digs’ they undertook as well as posting articles and images related to city gardening practices. Monica explained that setting up and maintaining the Facebook page gave her better insight into how social media works, meaning that she could use this knowledge for her paid work as a marketer: *‘so I started a Facebook page and I think there’s somewhere like 300 – over 300 “likes” so it’s nice to kind of – also because I work in marketing – it was nice for me to do some more social media and see what actually engages people’*. Thus, this refers to particular knowledge of what ‘works’, when one makes use of social media to promote an idea, which benefits her paid occupation. But Monica’s reasons for being involved in guerrilla gardening became even more layered. We had been walking around Stamford Hill for almost an hour when we got to talk about how she became involved in the practice:

*Monica: Yeah because I saw his Ted Talk (Finley 2016) and so I should say that I was doing this course – I don’t know if I mentioned that to you before?*

*Jan: No.*

*Monica: It's called the Landmark Forum and it's a self-development thing, and as part of that you have to design a community project. So that's kind of where this came from. I haven't really said that but (laughs) that's – but it has to be – it's about, I mean as a result of it some people kind of start their own businesses and things, but it's about designing a community project and it has to be – like they basically advise you to choose something that you're really passionate about and something that really kind of gets you going. So I was thinking, 'Oh what am I going to do? My interests are food and the environment and how can I marry those together?' And then I saw this talk by Ron Finley and I was just like, 'That's it!'*

Although I do not want to suggest that Monica's guerrilla gardening endeavours were entirely driven by the self-development course 'Landmark Forum', this surely played a role in her initiating a guerrilla gardening group with friends in the local area. The website of this specific training program outlines that it '...is designed to bring about positive, permanent shifts in the quality of your life...the quality of your relationships, the confidence with which you live your life, your personal productivity, your experience of the difference you make, your enjoyment of life' (Landmark Forum 2016). Thus, not only did Monica's guerrilla gardening practice offer her the opportunity to develop her social media skills, which she could use in her paid marketing work, but it was also part of her enrolment in a self-development course, aimed at bringing about 'positive shifts in the quality of your life'. This training encouraged participants to set up a 'community project' in something they were 'passionate' about. Thereby the lines between the play of Monica's guerrilla gardening and her paid work become increasingly blurred.

Second, Samantha is an active, long-term volunteer at the community garden. Her gardening practices are partly an escape, but they also contribute to her paid work as a studio manager at a graphic design agency. Samantha told me how she sees the volunteering:

*Samantha: Maybe, I don't know, a little bit of escape! (Both laugh) Because I don't think about work when I'm here really....So, that's pretty good.*

*Jan: At the same time, you also chat about work, isn't it?*

*Samantha: yeah, we chat about work. And it's quite nice, because some people give advice and support. I've met quite a few people that have needed designers. I've put the links in for them, and vice versa.*

Hence, guerrilla gardening offers Samantha a moment of relaxation away from her paid work, although at the same time it produces social contacts for her that feed directly into her paid work activities. Some of the people she has met whilst gardening have become customers at the company where she works. Furthermore, she has developed her understanding of the London job market by talking with fellow garden volunteers and visitors about their experiences of paid work. In addition, her employer encourages its employees to take five charity days each year. These are days for which Samantha is paid by her employer to conduct work at a charity of her choice, and at the moment of the go-along, Samantha was determined to use these charity days to work for the community garden. This is another way in which her play-time in the garden seems to get entangled with her paid work-time.

A third example of how gardening can get entangled with paid work activities is provided by James, another long term volunteer at the community garden. James has been a keen gardener since his childhood, and he is also a qualified landscape architect. He has previously worked at a charity specialising in supporting community green spaces, and he currently works at a landscape architecture studio. At the community garden, James thoroughly enjoys the manual work of looking after plants, as well as developing his understanding of the design and maintenance of public green spaces such as the Dalston garden. He comments on this: *'maybe I'm one of those lucky people, who's managed to find a job that I'm able to...where the line between play and work blurs slightly'*. James's volunteering encompasses the physical garden work of weeding, watering and harvesting, while in addition he indexes the wild-flower varieties present at the community garden. Furthermore, he regularly discusses the design of the garden space with the garden-coordinators. He says the following about how all this contributes to his professional knowledge as a landscape architect:

*So, I'm forever building up my internal knowledge of green spaces and continually developing my thoughts...professionally about where they sit within the city and that*

*kind of thing... So, I suppose, yeah, that's something that I want to maintain...whilst I'm here, and I'm gardening, although it's kind of...it's...I'm manually gardening, which is probably the other end of my kind of career spectrum. I'm still feeding into that. I think. If that makes sense?*

Thus, for James, achieving things in the garden has multiple meanings. He enjoys the manual work of volunteering at the community garden, but achieving also means enhancing his professional knowledge of public green spaces. As he reflects himself, the lines between play and work blur slightly.

Allotment gardener Sue provides the fourth and final example of how the knowledge and social contacts produced whilst gardening can become entangled with paid work activities. Sue works as a freelance gardener doing maintenance work in people's private gardens and has had her allotment since 2009. Only a couple of years before that, Sue had a job in catering, which she was *'fed up with'*. At that time, London's mayor, Ken Livingstone had introduced the 'investing in people' scheme, which offered employees the opportunity to re-train themselves *'I ticked the box "horticulture", because everyone else was choosing "IT"'*. She found herself really enjoying the evening classes, and signed up for more training. She then quit her catering job and got herself a job in a garden centre, where a customer asked her whether she could come and plant the plants in her garden. This was the start of her current occupation as a freelance gardener. Meanwhile, Sue started to rent an allotment plot and tried out various ways of growing fruit and vegetables. When she showed me her allotment plot, she pointed out a plum tree which she had bought very cheaply from an *'old hardworking woman'* who ran a nursery. Sue had brought a lot of customers to the nursery through her work as a freelance gardener, and as gratitude she was given the plum tree at a large discount: *'this was a really nice gesture, and each time when I see the tree, it reminds me of her'*. This portrait of Sue illustrates how her garden knowledge and social contacts travel back and forwards between her paid work as a freelance gardener and her 'play' on the allotment plot.

These four examples demonstrate how gardening practices produce knowledge for some research participants and extend their social networks. Gardening efforts get entangled with

paid work occupations in all sorts of ways. This analysis provides evidence for how the lines between play and work blur.

#### **4.2.4 Summary**

First, gardeners say that they get a sense of achievement from seeing the fruits of their efforts, referring to the visual element of garden work. Gardeners appreciate seeing the immediate results of clearing weeds from a bed, but they also enjoy seeing flowers grow in the space of a week, for instance. Second, harvesting, displaying and eating garden produce also creates a sense of achievement for gardeners. Third, some gardeners describe their gardening practices as productive of new knowledge and social contacts that feed into their personal capacities for paid work. The above analysis of gardeners' talk about achievement and gardening contrasts with Caillois and Huizinga's understanding of play as unproductive. Unlike Caillois' statement that play is a waste of time, the above provides evidence that gardening, practiced for enjoyment, is very much about getting a sense of achievement, harvesting garden produce and seeing the fruits of one's labour. The last section on producing knowledge and social contacts further complicates the narrative about the distinct, autonomous notion of play, speaking rather to Rojek's (2010) arguments about how play-time enhances the capacities of individuals to progress in their professional life. In other words, section 4.2 on gardening and achievement starts to unpack play and work as distinct opposing categories and shows us how gardens can be better understood as paradoxical spaces (Rose 1993, Longhurst 2006), productive of contradictory notions of play and work. The next section explores this ambiguity further.

### ***4.3 Volunteering***

For most research participants, gardening is a hobby, a way to spend free time. In the first instance, no one has forced them to do this, which suggests that gardeners are involved in their practices voluntarily. In this section, I will complicate this understanding of gardening as voluntary playful activity. First, I unpack how participants portray their practices as voluntary. Then, I suggest that, although they volunteer freely, aspects of their activities, such as the various ways in which plants need to be cared for consistently, make them more like 'work'.

Keeping on top of the garden is hard work. Subsequently, I shed light on the difficulties participants have in making time to garden due to the demands of paid work, friends, family etc. Finally, I discuss how gardeners feel a social obligation ‘to come in and volunteer’, and how institutional rules and regulations shape gardening practice. Once again, this section shows that gardening produces multiple and ambiguous meanings of both play and work.

#### **4.3.1 Voluntary? - ‘I choose to do this’**

Research participants talk about their involvement in gardening practices as something they do for fun, something they enjoy. They also emphasise that this is something they choose to do, something no one has forced them to do. Thereby they evoke the notion of play, a free and voluntary endeavour. For instance, community gardener Maurizio explains why he got involved as a volunteer: *‘I felt it was a really good chance to spend my free time in a meaningful way and at the same time learn about gardening’*. Likewise, community gardener Neil highlights that he himself chose to get involved: *‘I decided to get a lot more involved in food and gardens and urban agriculture’*. Community gardener James calls his volunteering *‘my-time. I choose to do this’*. Similarly, allotment gardener Julia describes her gardening as a form of play: *‘because it’s fun. I enjoy it. I don’t think it’s work, because I’m not really getting paid for it. And no one is forcing me to do it’*. Community gardener Megha finds the atmosphere relaxed, she does not feel forced into volunteering: *‘Yeah, but it’s so relaxed, you know, how everyone just rocks up fifteen minutes late and then we start talking about what we’ve done with our week’*. Finally, allotment gardener Quino takes it easy when he comes in: *‘I would usually come every two, three days. But I don’t do much work!’* Thus, all these gardeners underline that they have chosen to get involved in gardening in complete freedom. They see it as fun, my-time and enjoyable, emphasising that no one has forced them to do it. I also illustrated this sense of enjoyment in Section 4.1. Furthermore, they undertake gardening in their free time, they are not paid for it. Yet, this understanding of gardening in terms of voluntary enjoyable involvement becomes more complicated when I listen to the research participants’ stories for a bit longer.



### 4.3.2 The hard work of keeping on top of the garden

Whilst participants talk about volunteering and enjoying the garden, they also tell many stories about how it requires a lot of hard work to look after plants in the city. In other words, allotment, community and guerrilla gardening take concerted and consistent effort, which contradicts notions of play as entirely free and voluntary. In order for plants to flourish they need to be taken care of on a regular basis. This section provides evidence of how gardeners experience the hard work of keeping on top of the garden.

In this respect, allotment site secretary Paul observes that novice allotment gardeners sometimes have: *'their expectations up. A little odd, they seem to think that they can get the allotment and the allotment will look after itself...and they don't fully appreciate the time, the effort that goes into it'*. Hard work needs to be invested into the allotment plot in order to keep on top of it, something which several participants express: *'it was hard to keep on top of it'* (Jasna, allotment gardener), *'It's hard work'* (Stephanie, allotment gardener), *'It's so much work'* (Julia, allotment gardener). Participants talk about how plants need looking after in order to flourish, needing to be fed, watered, cut back and propagated. For instance, allotment gardener Robert refers to the recurring task of cutting back the grass on the path between his plot and his neighbour's. Pointing to a struggling plant, guerrilla gardener Monica puts it as follows: *'Well at least it's still more or less alive, but it probably does need a little bit more TLC'*. Here, Monica abbreviates the phrase *'tender loving care'* to underline that this plant needs watering more regularly, and some compost. Another guerrilla gardener, Barry, suggests this 'need' in a different way, saying, *'if people throw something on top of the plants. You have to get it out...'* These gardeners thus speak of plants 'needing' things. Action from gardeners is required to sustain plants and encourage their growth — *'it's got to be done'* (Jasna, allotment gardener). Otherwise plants die from neglect, like the onions allotment gardener Quino lost because he did not manage to get to his plot often enough.

This hard work of keeping on top of the garden involves a whole array of tasks, of which I will give a few examples here. For instance, allotment gardener Stephanie says: *'Well,*

*it's hard work keeping on top of the weeds. It's kind of hard keeping the grounds maintained, because you have to feed the soil. It's not something that you can take up on a whim. It's hard work*'. Weeding recurs as a task, and is highlighted by many gardeners. Preparing the soil is something that tends to be mentioned more by the allotment gardeners I spoke with. For example, allotment gardener Paul was concerned about preparing the soil on his plot before the cold wet winter kicked in, when it would become unworkable: *'Because I need to get the ground dug over. Or at least cleaned, manured'*. Gardeners interact continuously with plants, the environment and the weather to identify and test out what is needed. During the summer, Arthur, a regular volunteer at the community garden, was given the task of watering the plants by the garden coordinators. He was on *'watering duties'* and he realised the importance of his task: *'particularly when the weather's hot, making sure that this fig tree was always kept moist, because they have a huge demand for water'*. Arthur had built up knowledge about which areas of the garden needed more or less water, and he talked about the particular spot where the nasturtiums were as a *'nuisance'*. Another example of the need to water plants is given by guerrilla gardener Lisa, who showed me the blue thistle and fennel that were growing in her domestic garden, explaining that these plants are very well suited for guerrilla gardening because they are good for bees and *'will just keep going and self-seed everywhere'*. Yet, she warns that *'you have to be prepared to go back and water it when it is first planted'*, which means returning to the planters during the first couple of weeks after planting the seedlings. In these gardening processes, humans and more-than-humans become entangled. Gardeners identify and respond to plants and their needs, feeling a responsibility for the plants they have put into the ground. Allotment gardener Sue evokes this sense of taking care, drawing a comparison between people and plants: *'Imagine someone sitting alone in the corner, quiet, sad. They need care, they need to be taken out. It's the same with plants, they need specific attention, specific care'*.

This section has shown that it requires hard work to keep on top of weeds, to water plants regularly, to prepare the soil, to cut back grass and so many more things that *'need'* to be done for the garden to flourish. This sense of gardeners' responsibility, of taking care, of

recurring tasks in the garden and of the diverse and specific needs of plants begins to complicate the picture of gardening as an entirely voluntary, free activity.

### 4.3.3 Making time to garden

Gardeners portray their involvement in gardening as voluntary and free. However, I found that research participants actually had to put in a lot of effort to make the time to garden. They had to work hard to organise their everyday lives in order to be able to come into the garden and look after the plants. Here I outline how several participants went about juggling the demands of the garden and the rest of their lives.

Guerrilla gardener Monica sets the tone well when she jokingly says: *‘you know obviously we all work, and it takes a little bit of time, you need to be a little bit organised, and if I was a lady of leisure I would have all the time in the world to devote to this’*. Indeed, most research participants did not fall into the ‘lady of leisure’ category. Allotment gardener Stephanie describes this negotiation process as follows: *‘it’s a logistical nightmare to try and juggle a full-time job that’s so demanding, and having kids and an allotment’*. Furthermore, she observes that the *‘time I set aside for regular maintenance kind of goes by the wayside a bit’*. Likewise, allotment gardener Julia does not always find it easy to combine looking after her recently born son and the allotment plot: *the thing is obviously having him [points to the baby on her chest] it just makes it hard to come up all the time. Because...you know he sleeps like for half an hour sometimes. And you can run around and do stuff on your own, but then once he wakes, he screams you know. And you’ve got to have him. And I can’t really lean over like this with him in this thing. So, yeah it’s not easy’*. Here, Julia’s baby limits the number of times she can come to the allotment plot, on top of which she can only do gardening tasks in intervals of half an hour, when the baby has fallen asleep. Thus, her care-work for her baby conflicts with her care-work for the allotment plot.

Gardeners mention many things that make devoting time to gardening more challenging. Allotment gardener Paul comes to his plot less often these days because he is taking care of his partner, who is struggling with a bad back. Allotment gardener Maria plans

her regular hospital visits around her duty to open the allotment gates for the manure delivery. For some community gardeners, the Saturday afternoon slot for volunteering at the garden can clash with visits from friends and family. Megha laments: *'Saturdays are pretty difficult, especially in the summer when you've got other things going on'*, while Lilly says: *'if my Saturday is free then I'll be here, but if – you know, if other things are happening, if I have family visiting or old friends in town and things like that, then I would probably prioritise that'*. Community gardener James often combines things on a Saturday, without returning home in between. On one Saturday afternoon volunteering session, he said: *'It's my brother's birthday party tonight, so I'm going there afterwards. So, I'm bringing my garden boots separately in a bag'*. He tries to come every Saturday: *'I have actually added it to my calendar, to my online calendar to reoccur every Saturday. So, when I'm London I do come'*. Gardeners thus find different ways of making time to garden, which sometimes involves planning clear time slots in their calendar for gardening. For community gardener Neil, this entails devoting at least ten per cent of his time each week to garden volunteering, which is driven by *'sort of...an ethic of...Christian ethic of giving back'*. At the start of the New Year, he formulated *'smart objectives'* for how to spend his free time, involving gardening, permaculture and the local community.

When gardeners cannot find enough time to come and garden, the plants might suffer. For instance, allotment gardener Quino struggles to synchronise his working schedules and the rhythms of the seasons. He showed me some plants whose growth had been stifled because: *'I started everything late...just a little bit busy with work'*. Similarly, guerrilla gardener Lisa has struggled to water and weed her guerrilla patches: *'I have to say, because we are involved in a house move. And work has been extremely, inordinately busy at the university, not as much as I normally would... But I...the last time I went out was about three weeks ago for a serious hit'*. Although she regrets not being able to guerrilla garden, at the same time Lisa knows that the plants are quite tough and will get back into shape after some time.

Some gardeners find new ways to negotiate time to garden. Guerrilla gardeners Lisa and Jackie bring bags of seeds along their commutes through the city. Jackie's commute entails

cycling: *'it's along the canal because it's my route, so wherever I go along the canal I just spread the seeds wherever I can'*, while Lisa's journey involves multiple bus routes in South London. Their gardening times thus overlap with their everyday life commutes, and making time to garden extends into other everyday activities and spaces.

Thus, gardeners often feel that their time for gardening is squeezed by all sorts of demands from family, friends and paid and domestic work. These time-constraints become spatialised at the allotment site. Allotment site secretary Paul strongly advises new allotment holders to first take on half a plot (half the size of the traditional standard ten poles or 250 square meters), because he knows from experience that new allotment holders tend to underestimate the time and work that goes into cultivating a plot. Allotment gardener Julia initially hesitated when she was advised to take on only half a plot. However, after some months of gardening she was grateful for this particular advice: *'Thank God we just had half a plot! It's so much work'*. Similarly, allotment gardener Martha chose to take on only half a plot, which was in good condition, as she was aware that she would not have enough time to look after the full 250 square meters. She says: *'So, I thought this was more feasible. And I work, and I've got a kid, so it's difficult to fit it in really'*. Furthermore, Martha sought out time-efficient strategies for gardening: *'I got this book actually, which helped me quite a lot, which is called "The Half Hour Allotment"'*. Martha describes the content of the self-help book in her own words as follows: *'Don't think you can keep up with the traditional allotment people. You know, if you're a busy person, actually you know, the traditions are all about being really economical and careful about everything. And having time. And actually if you don't have time, but you do have a bit more money, you know, buy plants and make things easy'*. Thus, this book has helped Martha deal with the constraints on the time she has to look after her plot. Her choice of half a plot and the deployment of the book speak to the discussion in Chapter 2 on how the size of allotment plots was defined historically. As Hoyles (1991) argues, industrialists limited the size of plots to ten poles, which was large enough to feed one family but would not exhaust a factory worker. According to Hoyles, industrialists did not want allotments to have a detrimental effect on employees' capacity to work in their factories. The current further reduction of the size of an

allotment plot seems to be emblematic of post-industrial society, in which people are under increasing pressure to negotiate various demands on their time.

My analysis suggests that gardeners negotiate all kinds of demands ‘outside’ their gardening practices each week to ensure they can actually garden at the allotment plot, community garden or guerrilla patch. They put in a lot of effort in order to be able to spend time in the garden, which shows that voluntary involvement in gardening is bound up with the work of carving out moments in the week to do so. Gardeners deploy multiple strategies to make time to garden, ranging from making use of recurring events in the digital calendar to bringing along seeds in a bag on their daily commute. Furthermore, some participants use books like *The Half Hour Allotment* to seek out ways to use their gardening time as efficiently as possible, thereby rendering their garden time instrumental as well as limiting the garden work they take on by opting for smaller allotment plots.

#### **4.3.4 Institutional and social obligations**

The way garden spaces are organised has implications for the degree to which participants feel obliged to come there and garden, which further complicates the idea of volunteering. This section discusses two forms of obligation encountered by gardeners: institutional and social.

I will look first at how institutional rules and regulations structure gardening practices. At the allotment site, gardeners are required by the local council to cultivate their plot, as stated in the council regulations for allotment holders. Under heading 1.2, “maintaining your plot”, it says: *‘Tenants are reminded that the purpose of an allotment site is predominantly for the cultivation of vegetables, fruit and flowers. It is expected that 75% of the total plot area will be cultivated’* (Haringey Council 2011, p. 4). The allotment site secretary and the council’s officers enforce this rule requiring tenants to cultivate three quarters of the plot, alongside other regulations covering matters including the use of chemicals and the maximum shed size. Especially since the waiting list for allotment plots has become longer, allotment site secretary Paul has held on to his *‘mantra of use it or lose it’*. I talked to him about what this entails for tenants:

*Paul: Well come on site and actually cultivate it and make it productive and actually grow crops on it.*

*Jan: Yes. So it's about growing plants?*

*Paul: Yes, yes. For what they are supposed to be for, they are for the tenant to actually grow fruit and vegetables for his own use. If somebody is just using it – because we do have one or two people – just as a space where they can come down with all their friends at the weekend and have a good time with a BBQ, that's not my idea of what the allotments are there for.*

Thus, it would not suffice for allotment holders to just pay their yearly rent. They cannot just spend time at the plot meeting friends or simply enjoying the outside air. The institutional context forces allotment holders to work the land, to cultivate the soil, to produce vegetables, fruit or flowers. If they do not, they lose the right to their allotment plot and run the risk of their tenancy agreement being terminated by the council. Besides this, allotment holders are asked to volunteer for specific roles to help run the allotment site. For instance, Maria, Robert and Pablo are all on the allotment committee, which decides on matters concerning the maintenance of the site and the use of its small budget. In addition, the 'trading-shed' is run by a small group of volunteer allotment holders.

Unlike the allotment site, the community garden is not embedded in such a clearly defined set of rules and regulations concerning gardening practices. Most importantly, community garden volunteers have no direct duty to maintain the garden, which is the responsibility of the social enterprise run by the garden coordinators. Thus, volunteers are not forced to come and garden. My fieldwork further suggests that the way in which the community garden is organised constitutes how volunteers go about their gardening. I observed during Saturday afternoon volunteering that garden tasks and ways of doing gardening are mainly shaped by the coordinators. At the time of the participant observations, it was predominantly the garden coordinators who distributed the things that needed doing amongst the group of volunteers, as well as setting the parameters of tasks like planting seedlings, weeding, cutting and watering. Gardening happened mostly in small teams of volunteers, who were guided by

the garden coordinators. These also decided what was planted where and what could be harvested, all of which created a well looked after garden, but also limited the potential for volunteers to garden in the way they wanted. At the same time, this allowed inexperienced gardeners to get immediately involved in the community garden. Furthermore, a few enthusiastic, skilful garden volunteers were offered more freedom to shape small parts of the garden according to their ideas, but always in conversation with the garden coordinators. For instance, James initiated and looked after a wild flower area at the back of the garden.

The practices of the guerrilla gardeners are not so enforced or shaped by institutional obligations. This is probably due to the nature of their practice, as they do not ask for prior permission to garden at public sites. Some gardeners I studied had claimed public planters that were neglected by the council, but I have not found any evidence of guerrilla gardeners being asked or forced to stop their practices at these places. Research participants Lisa and Richard both mentioned encountering gardeners employed by the local council, but in both instances the council employees acknowledged the efforts of the guerrilla gardeners and let them continue, without interfering too much in these ‘guerrilla’ spots.

Addressing the social aspect, gardening practices are shaped by feelings of responsibility and guilt. Research participants feel a social obligation to come in and garden, and this sense of responsibility is felt towards the plants, the garden and fellow gardeners. Community gardener Zeynep evokes this feeling: *‘I owe it to the garden and to the plants. So I kind of feel like: “right they are waiting for me, so I must come along”’*. For Zeynep, volunteering at the garden becomes a mix of both play and work: *‘Again though, like I said it’s a responsibility I feel. It’s not a heavy burden at all! But it’s something that I want to have, I suppose. So, in that respect, I see it as work as well’*. Similarly, guerrilla gardener Lisa speaks of this ambiguity in terms of feeling an obligation to garden: *‘Well...there is labour involved. But it doesn’t feel like work. Although I do feel guilty when I haven’t been down to [location of guerrilla planter] as much as I should have done’*. Other participants described experiencing a sense of guilt towards the garden when they failed to come in regularly, such as community gardeners Lilly: *‘if I come here too many times without having volunteered I feel guilty’*; and



James: *'Well...I do feel like...I don't come often enough...I actually, I feel guilty'*. Allotment gardener Jasna qualified one neglected area of her allotment plot as the *'allotment part of shame'*. To sum up, most allotment, community and guerrilla gardeners I researched felt a social obligation towards the plants and their fellow gardeners to come and garden. These feelings of guilt and responsibility speak more towards ideas of work than play.

#### **4.3.5 Summary**

This section has shown that research participants portray their gardening practices as something they have decided to undertake. They talk about gardening as a voluntary activity which they do in their free time for their own enjoyment. These are all qualities ascribed to notions of play, as conceptualised by cultural theorists Huizinga (1950) and Caillois (1961). However, I have identified three ways in which this notion of volunteering becomes more complicated and thereby alludes to notions of work. First, gardeners have to work hard to 'keep on top' of their garden spaces. Second, participants have to put in a lot of effort to make time to garden, negotiating various demands in their lives – and I have identified how different forms of care-work can conflict. Third, gardeners feel social obligations to the garden and fellow gardeners to come in and garden. Furthermore, the institutional context has different effects on allotment, community and guerrilla gardeners. This section has thus specified how gardening produces ambiguous relations between ideas of play and work and so contributes to the understanding that gardening breaks these categories down 'into entangled contingencies' (DeSilvey 2003, p. 21), making it more difficult to see where play begins and work ends and vice versa. It furthermore extends Schoneboom's observation on allotments that they 'neither form a pure rebellion nor a harmonious anti-dote to work-related stress' (Schoneboom and May 2013, p. 148).

### *Conclusions*

The evidence presented in this chapter demonstrates that gardening practices enact notions of both play and work. Research participants ascribe a variety of qualities to gardening as a practice which speaks to ideas of play as embodied, absorbing and fun, as theorised by Caillois (1961) and Huizinga (1950), but which also alludes to ideas of work in terms of intense physical

effort, a sense of achievement and social and institutional obligations. Thus, these findings suggest that gardening practices produce a paradoxical space ‘imbued with multiple, ambiguous’ (Longhurst 2006, p. 582) meanings of play and work. In addressing the question: *why do people garden?* I have analysed three themes that participants ascribe to their gardening practices: enjoying, achieving and volunteering. Each of these themes informs the discussion of the relation between play and work.

First of all, I have shown that gardeners value the intense embodiment involved in doing gardening. In this respect, some participants make clear distinctions between the corporealities of their paid work in an office and that of their garden work. Gardeners are also enchanted and captivated by the liveliness of the garden and its plants, speaking about being surprised and enthused by seeing plants grow. Moreover, participants seem to feel more alive in the garden: their senses open up, textures are explored, colours are absorbed and smells are inhaled. Caillois’ notion of *paidia* helped me to understand this unstructured, ephemeral, tactile mode of exploring garden spaces. Gardeners got to know the garden through their hands, noses and mouths. These findings resonate with and extend the writings of cultural geographers Degen et al. (2010) on ‘fleshiness’ and how routine corporeal engagements teach gardeners to be affected, Ginn’s (2017) writing on the enchantment and risks involved in gardening, and Bhatti et al.’s (2009) reflection on how ‘pottering about’ in the garden can produce enchantment. Furthermore, this sensorial richness, immersive practice and embodied characteristics all allude to the writings of Huizinga and Caillois on play as being fun, immersive and embodied.

Secondly, the findings about gardeners and their appreciation of achieving things in the garden contradicts Caillois’ idea that people who are playing are ‘unproductive’ (Caillois 1961, p. 9) and Huizinga’s claim that players are uninterested in ‘immediate material results or the individual satisfaction of biological needs’ (Huizinga 1950, p. 9). Based on the evidence presented, I suggest that people who garden in their free time, for fun as it were, actually enjoy the sense of achievement, seeing how things change in the garden and harvesting and eating their produce. These findings extend cultural geographers’ understanding of urban gardens as

sites of creativity (Crouch 2010a) in which the binaries of nature versus culture and work versus leisure break down into entangled contingencies (DeSilvey 2003). In addition, some gardeners describe how their gardening practices are productive of new knowledge and social contacts that feed into their personal capacities for paid work. The latter notion further complicates the narrative of pure play, speaking rather to Rojek's (2010) argument that play-time enhances the capacities of individuals to progress in their professional life.

Third, this analysis of how participants talk about their gardening practices complicates understandings of play as being an entirely free and voluntary activity (Huizinga 1950, Caillois 1961). Huizinga writes that 'all play is a voluntary activity' (Huizinga 1950, p. 7), continuing, 'it is never a task. It is done at leisure, during "free time"' (Huizinga 1950, p. 8). Although gardeners say that they themselves choose to garden, saying 'nobody forced me to do this', claiming to be involved for enjoyment, once gardening is started it becomes less free and voluntary. I identified three ways in which gardeners complicate volunteering. First of all, they experience difficulties in keeping up with the '*hard work*' of maintenance and care for the plants. Secondly, they struggle to make time to come and garden due to the demands of paid and domestic work, friends and family. Third, some gardening practices are shaped by social and institutional demands. Thus, these social, material and legal responsibilities and obligations with which gardening is imbued complicate the understanding of play as being entirely free and voluntary.

To conclude, the evidence and discussion suggest that the relations between work and play are not quite as Huizinga and Caillois theorise. Rather than thinking of play and work as opposites, with clear-cut boundaries between them, the discussion above demonstrates that gardening enacts notions of both play and work. Gardening produces a paradoxical space imbued with multiple, ambiguous meanings of play and work. The visceral experience of gardening clearly alludes to Huizinga's and Caillois' notions of play as being absorbing and fun, as it produces an affective intensity. However, I have shown that achieving is also an important part of the enjoyment of gardening, which contradicts conceptions of play as being uninterested in results. Furthermore, for some gardeners, their free time garden pursuits produce

knowledge and social contacts which feed directly into their paid work. For these participants, urban gardening practices do not function as the traditional ‘complete break’ from work, but actually contribute to their employability in often implicit and complex ways. Finally, the section on volunteering has shown that gardening requires hard work from participants, both in the garden itself and in the effort to make time for garden work, care work and paid work, as well as being shaped by social and institutional obligations. Gardening therefore produces much more ambiguous relations between play and work than implied by the previously discussed notion of play as a distinct, voluntary, free time activity. This chapter has thus shown that play and work become entangled, knit tightly together, just as practices of work are needed to sustain and enable play.

In the following two chapters I will explore these distinctions and relations between the notions of play and work further, within the specific context of my research participants’ gardening experiences. In Chapter 5, *Making Urban Gardens*, I take a closer look at the spatial and temporal distinctions made between play and work, analysing how gardeners imagine garden spaces and how they get into the flow-zone and materialise boundaries. Then, in Chapter 6, *Cultivating Socialities*, I discuss festive, chance, care and contestation encounters, which will suggest new ways of thinking about play and work. First, though, I investigate participants’ practices of making garden borders in the upcoming photo-essay, which will lead the way for Chapter 5’s discussion of how gardeners construct and transgress boundaries.



## **Photo-Essay B. De-Constructing Garden Boundaries**

Chapter 2 discussed the argument of some theorists (Huizinga 1938, Caillois 1961) that play is enacted in a bounded space set apart from everyday life. I examine this bounded notion of play in urban gardening, and in order to explore spatial boundary making practices, this photo-essay records and analyses how borders between garden spaces take shape. The set of images presented is the result of working with a photo-script (Suchar 1997), as discussed in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.6.2). For the allotment, the images show the huge diversity of ways of constructing garden boundaries. The collection makes visible the variety of materials used by allotment gardeners to construct a border between their plot and the adjacent one. At the community garden, volunteers do not look after individual plots assigned to them, but instead garden raised beds together, supervised by the garden coordinators. Therefore, the images depict the materials used for demarcating borders between garden spaces to be cultivated and looked at on the one hand and other spaces to be walked through or sat in on the other hand. In contrast to allotment and community gardens, the guerrilla gardening cases I studied did not take place in large enclosed spaces (with only one or two entrances). Instead, the guerrilla gardeners cultivated small patches of land alongside or in public spaces, or in raised beds owned by the council but neglected. All of these were situated in the midst of traffic, in busy pedestrian spaces etc. I made images showing how raised beds and other kinds of planters intersect with the spaces of flow directly next to them. This shows both the practice of marking out garden territory and the mixing up of garden and urban spaces. The photo-essay design is informed by the photo-script, as it allows simultaneous comparison of the way boundaries of garden spaces are made within particular case studies and across them.



Allotment Garden



Community Garden



Guerrilla Garden









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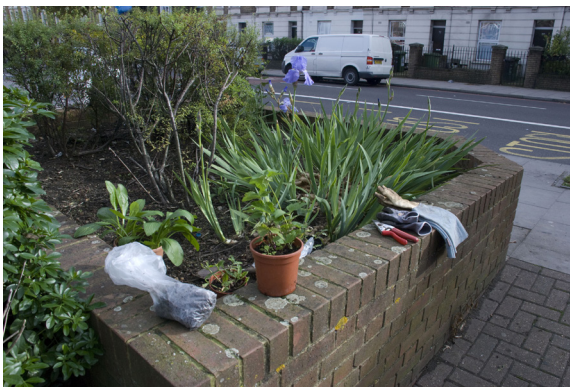




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## Chapter 5 Making Urban Gardens: Practices of Boundary Making

This chapter addresses the second research sub-question: *How do the embodied practices of gardening create distinct time-spaces for play and/or work?* In this respect, Huizinga writes that play creates a distinct time-space which is clearly defined by either material boundaries or boundaries in the realm of ideas. Huizinga envisions playgrounds as set apart from everyday life: ‘forbidden spots, isolated, hedged round, hallowed, within which special rules obtain. All are temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart’ (1950, p. 10). Caillois supports this claim, stating that play is ‘separate’ and ‘circumscribed within limits of space and time, defined and fixed in advance’ (Caillois 1961, p. 9). Both of these cultural theorists emphasise the importance of the material and immaterial boundaries of play, and in this chapter I discuss how allotment, community and guerrilla gardening practices make and unmake garden boundaries. In so doing, I explore the notion of the playground as a bounded space and address the temporal and spatial distinctions made between notions of play and work. Once again, the chapter will suggest that, while the boundaries between work and play are sometimes clear, they are also frequently porous and permeable. This chapter will show how garden boundaries are continuously transgressed, and thereby it will further develop my thinking on gardening as being productive of paradoxical spaces of play and work.

To examine how garden time-spaces and their boundaries are made and unmade, I deploy cultural geographers’ understanding of gardens as embodied, practiced landscapes (Crouch 2001, Degen *et al.* 2010, Hitchings 2010), as discussed in Chapter 2. I analyse three different ways of making and unmaking garden boundaries: affective, imaginative, and material. Section 5.1 discusses how gardeners become absorbed in their gardening practices and how this embodied zoning out confirms ideas of play. Section 5.2 reveals how participants imagine the garden as an oasis within the urban space whilst at the same time this spatial imaginary of the garden as a peaceful green escape is continuously contested. Section 5.3 then provides more

evidence of how, whilst gardeners work hard to materialise boundaries to maintain a place apart from the everyday life of the city, things continuously cross these boundaries.

### *5.1 Being absorbed in gardening*

Whilst they garden, gardeners enact an affective zone, which participants understand as distinct from other time-spaces of their everyday life. I will suggest that this absorbing quality of urban gardening confirms Huizinga and Caillois' understanding of play as having an affective intensity.

Community gardener Zeynep evokes the affective zone enacted whilst doing a 'big job' in the garden:

*When I do a big job, I do prefer to be on my own doing it, because, when you speak to somebody that's great, however, depending on the job, you kind of zone out. I zone out and I ...instead of rapidly thinking about things as we normally do. Or I normally do. When I'm weeding, or planting or something, I, my thought process is much slower. So, I get to mull over things, rather than for it to just attack my brain in a way. So, it's almost, kind of, a rhythmic kind of, my hands are doing the action, my brain is slowly going along with it. So, it's relaxing in that way, you know'.*

In the above, Zeynep articulates how being absorbed in her gardening practice can open up a space of reflection and relaxation for her. Here, the embodied practice of carrying out a garden task, particularly one involving repetitive bodily movements, brings Zeynep into what psychologist Csikszentmihalyi terms a state of 'flow', which he describes as 'a unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which he is in control of his actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and the environment, between stimulus and response, or between past, present, and future' (Csikszentmihalyi 1975, p. 36). Translated to gardening practices, this state of flow entails dissolving the distinctions between a gardener's self and the garden space, as well as a smoothing of temporalities. Guerrilla gardener Lisa describes a similar process of zoning out when she is weeding:

*Lisa: yeah, it is the whole process. Even, you do get into a bit of a tunnel vision. When do you a bit of weeding, it extends into three hours (laughs). Although, I am actually a lot more weed tolerant, and very specific to what weeds. Only if they smother do they get removed. If it's just a dandelion, I let the dandelion live. Dandelions are good (both laugh). Yeah.*

*Jan: Giving a head space, how does that work then? What is that?*

*Lisa: I don't know. ... It is intelligible ... you know ... I really don't know what it is. It's something about the physical activity that just feels right. Just cultivation (laughs). I don't know. But it's really, it's addictive. Yeah. It is really gratifying. (Lisa, guerrilla gardener)*

These accounts exemplify the contemplative modes of engagement that Degen et al. (2010) identify in their study of corporeal articulations in urban nature. Similarly to Zeynep's description of 'zoning out', Lisa speaks of 'tunnel vision' being produced in the practice of gardening. They both articulate how the process of repetitive movements, of embodied interactions with plants, makes them feel absorbed in the practice and their direct environment. Bhatti et al. (2009) also describe this particular mode of being in the domestic garden, producing 'a certain kind of space that is neither here nor there, but in-between, a mode of "being" always in sensual emotion' (2009, p. 73). Here I extend Bhatti et al.'s understanding beyond the realms of the domestic garden into public gardens.

In addition, gardeners talk about how this feeling of being absorbed in the garden environment and the practice of gardening is enhanced by direct physical contact between their hands or feet and the soil and plants. As community gardener Neil says:

*And partly I, I, what I like coming here doing. I like my hands getting in soil. I just like being outside. I spend all the time in the office. And I live in Hackney, which is very very urban. And I like actually getting my hands in soil. I used to as a kid, and I haven't done it for a long time.*

Neil ascribes therapeutic powers to getting his hands in the soil, stating that ‘*soil actually has anti-depressant qualities*’. Other research participants made similar remarks about being absorbed in the environment of the garden. Like community gardener Neil, allotment gardener Allan ascribes therapeutic powers to touching the soil, in this case with his bare-feet:

*...quite often I found it useful just to take my shoes and socks off and to actually stand in the soil while I was doing it and to make that connection. I found that that used to relieve a lot of tension within myself. It's like negative energy was taken away by standing there. So quite often I would take off my socks and shoes and be walking on the soil just...and it was just fantastic. I don't know how to describe it. Sometimes my feet get hot by just standing. If I stood on one spot, my feet would get hot, the bottom of my feet, and I felt as though I was just connecting it. Really bad days just melted away, if that makes sense.*

After a severe back injury, Allan had quit his job in engineering in order to recover from several major operations. During the go-along, Allan made clear that cultivating the allotment plot helped him to recover both physically and mentally. Both Allan and Neil vividly describe the expressive qualities of gardening, and how getting in touch with the soil, being absorbed in the practice, helps them to process emotions. This confirms Crouch's reflections on the embodied feelings and doings of gardeners and what the changing patterns in the ground signify: ‘changing relationships, feelings, ways of being and becoming’ (2010, p. 137).

### **5.1.1 Summary**

Embodied gardening practices like weeding and planting seeds can thus create feelings of zoning out, evoking a different sense of time and place. This affective zone alludes to what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) describes as the ‘flow-experience’. Gardeners get carried away with their repetitive bodily movements, which allows their thoughts to wander or disappear. Furthermore, for some these processes of connecting to the soil also allow emotions to be expressed, which resonates with Crouch's (2010a) study of creativities in the community garden and Degen et al.'s (2010) account of passionate involvements with nature. Moreover, this

analysis shows that gardening can produce the affective intensity which Huizinga attributes to play. Therefore, I suggest that gardeners' intense bodily engagements with nature can produce the distinct affective time-space of play. Building upon this affective notion, next I will unpack imaginative boundary making practices, introducing a more porous understanding of garden boundaries.

## 5.2 *Imagining the garden*

*Maria: Well, at my age, I haven't got much work to do at home. And up here, once you come inside them gates, it's paradise. You're in paradise, honestly.*

*Jan: What makes it paradise then?*

*Maria: It's so peaceful.*

When I listened back to the above fragment of the go-along with allotment gardener Maria, I could hardly detect some of the words spoken, as at that very moment a plane flew over the allotment site. This plane in the sky, passing over the garden space, ridiculed Maria's claim that the garden is '*a paradise...so peaceful*'. In the following, I explore this contradiction between the performative discourse of the garden's spatial imaginary as a peaceful green refuge and the everyday disruptions of this paradise such as loud sounds and unpleasant smells.

During go-alongs and participant observations, participants often performed a discourse of the garden as a distinct space, apart from everyday life, in which they could find peace and quiet. I understand their talk as being shaped by the dominant cultural understandings of the garden as a paradise on earth in which humans and nature exist in harmony (Olwig 2002, p. 131). Through their everyday speech, they enact the spatial imaginary of the garden as a peaceful space of escape from everyday urban realities. In deploying this spatial imagery, participants denote 'a difference between what is "inside" vs. "outside"' (Watkins 2015, p. 511). The following series of extracts taken from go-alongs with participants provides evidence of how their talk makes the garden into this different place:



*We would come here in the summer when all the trees are in full leaf and you wouldn't think you were in London. It's a little bit of the countryside. (Paul, allotment gardener)*

*It's literally like being drawn into this other little world, and the noises of the cars almost disappear, and you get drawn into another one of the blackbird chirping his alarm that somebody is coming and all the other birds darting around. (Allan, allotment gardener)*

*Well, if you look around, you can see. It's...you think you're in the middle of the country. You wouldn't think you're in the centre of London, really. You can't hear the traffic, you can occasionally here a plane going over, but that's about it. (Stephanie, allotment gardener)*

*It's a safe spot for me, in a way, because I live around this area. And it's just so busy, so many cars, so much transport. And once you walk in here, it's a whole different world. You know, I could be in Yorkshire. I can be in Scotland, it's just...that little bit of green that kind of...gives me a bit of hope actually...(both laugh) for this area. (Zeynep, community gardener)*

*It's like the secret garden, because you've got all the...you've got the traffic and the noise. It is noisy, Dalston, I mean a few people have said, 'How do you live there with the sirens constantly going off?' And then you come in here, and it's like a little peace. Just that little sanctuary and quiet. (Samantha, community gardener)*

*Bagpuss: It's an oasis.*

*Jan: And what makes it an oasis?*

*Bagpuss: Well, the nature, you know, the greenery. I mean look at this, this grass has taken now. We never had this before! But also what makes it tranquil, is like the...if you just close your eyes. You know. Ok, you hear the hum of traffic, but it's not loud and oppressive. People move slowly here, you know. And a load of kids walking around this door. Tranquil and you know, just the green space itself. I feel basic, a very quiet pleasant place, you know. (Bagpuss, community gardener)*

*I'm here almost on a daily basis just for a bit of serenity and peace outside of the concrete jungle beyond the...beyond the doors. It's like when you walk in here – when I walk in here it's almost like you're not in London anymore. (John, community gardener)*

These rich descriptions often start with *'when you walk in here'*, suggesting a rite of passage. In this talk, entering the garden is evoked as getting into a different world. Some participants articulate that this world is pulling them in, they are *'drawn into a different world'*. These gardeners use words like *'paradise'*, *'oasis'*, *'countryside'* to describe this *'other world'*. They characterise the garden as *'peaceful'*, *'serene'*, *'sanctuary'* and *'quiet'*. I suggest that the *'spatial imaginary'* of the garden is at work here, a performative discourse that makes the garden a site apart from the *'concrete jungle'*, away from the *'madness of everything'*, as if it is *not* London. These research participants construct an escape from the noise and density of the city, performing a discourse that this is not an urban space, but a tranquil safe retreat.

Yet, guerrilla gardeners' descriptions of their planting interventions differ significantly from the performed discourses of the allotment and community gardeners. Instead of imagining a distinct enclosed space apart from the city, guerrilla gardeners radically re-imagine the city as the *'site'* of the garden. For instance, Lisa describes how, when on a simple bus ride, she sees planting spaces everywhere:

*Well, you know I do tend to be on the bus and just anywhere, just think 'that could be a garden, that could be a garden...you could grow something there'. You know, the city needs to breathe. There is no...there is no reason not to plant. And I get quite frustrated with. I mean I know. Especially in the days of austerity. Council funding is limited. But they...they tend to lock into...particular zones.*

In the above quote, Lisa explicitly contests policy conceptions of greenery as needing to be in *'particular zones'*. Instead, she imagines the whole urban environment as a different space, a space that needs to *'breathe'*, one that could be much greener. I have observed similar attitudes in other guerrilla gardeners, who tend to see opportunities for growing in nooks and corners, at

roundabouts and under fly-overs, in cracks in the pavement and neglected council beds. Their imagination helps to shape a dispersed garden, a set of small interventions stitched together by the gardener. Most importantly, guerrilla gardeners radically re-imagine the city as a garden, and thereby break down conventional distinctions between green and urban spaces

However, there are tensions between participants' descriptions of the garden and my observations in the 'field', as well as contradictions within gardeners' own talk. I observed multiple disruptions of this serene world of the garden, which placed it back into the hustle and bustle of the city. For instance, community gardener Neil recalled an evening in which '*the calm of the garden*' was '*spoiled*' by sounds spilling into the garden from a street food festival on one side and beats coming from a music party on the other. Similarly, community gardener James recalls doing the gardening one day, when visitors notified him that a drunken visitor to the garden was shouting. James told Colin, the manager, about the disturbance, and Colin talked to the rowdy woman and asked her to either quieten down or leave the garden space. James understood Colin's interventions as '*just ensuring that the kind of calm of the garden was maintained*'. Aoife, community garden coordinator, also recalled several moments of unwanted noise in the garden. She was upset about the loud '*horrible rap*' music coming from the windows of a neighbouring building, right at the moment when she was welcoming a class of schoolchildren with special needs. Aoife also recalled how the 'constant noise' of building work at the hotel next door disturbed the quiet of the garden. All these examples illustrate that garden volunteers and managers are kept busy maintaining the 'calm' of the garden. Peacefulness is worked on and loud and unwanted people are asked to leave.

At the allotment site, disruptions of the peace come from both 'outside' and 'inside' the garden. To give an example of sounds travelling into the garden, on one occasion I noticed loud drum and bass music coming from a neighbouring home. The sound carried a long way over the site, and it felt unusual to be hearing this at the allotment. It did not fit with my previous visits to the site, and it was the first and also last time that I heard such loud music coming from neighbours. On that day, I joined both Paul and Sue in their gardening, and they were none too happy about the musical accompaniment. Disturbances also come from within the garden. For

instance, allotment site secretary Paul keeps an eye on allotment holders' barbecues to ensure that they do not have too many guests, as he is concerned that such gatherings might spill over into neighbouring plots and thereby infringe neighbours' right to '*peaceful enjoyment*' of their plots. Other instances of disruption are caused by machines used by some allotment gardeners to plough their plots, and Martha recalled that it was not pleasant to be at the site whilst others were using these loud devices. During the go-along with Jasna, we moved a few plots along in order to avoid the recording of our conversation being spoiled by the noise from a grass cutting device being used by neighbours.

Participants' spatial imaginary of the garden as a paradise in which humans and nature find perfect harmony is not only disrupted by travelling sounds. For example, I heard a horrific story about a close friend of an allotment gardener who had been slaughtered with a sword on the streets of North London. He carried newspapers containing reports of the story with him to the allotment site, and sharing the story about the brutal death of his close friend disrupted his idea of the garden as an escape from the violence of the city.

This discussion has shown that the spatial imaginations of the garden as a peaceful escape from urban life which participants reproduce are challenged in all sorts of ways. Furthermore, both allotment and community gardens work hard to maintain the idea of the garden as a peaceful sanctuary, for instance by negotiating the sounds which penetrate the garden space and asking loud (or drunk) visitors to leave. In contrast, guerrilla gardeners seem oblivious to loud car traffic, and most of the guerrilla gardeners I have spoken with are not too bothered by cars passing by. They might even thrive on gardening right in the middle of the hustle and bustle, surrounded by busy traffic.

### **5.2.1 Summary**

To recap, I have discussed the contradictions between participants' talk about the garden as a peaceful site of escape and the constant disruptions of this reproduced spatial imaginary. This spatial imaginary of the garden is shaped by historical conceptions of the garden as paradise on earth. I argue that participants work hard to imagine the garden into a distinct space, an escape

from the urban ‘hustle and bustle’, while this is continuously challenged by noises from neighbours and other gardeners for instance. I understand participants’ performative talk as a boundary making practice through the act of imagination. Despite facing multiple forms of urban disruption, gardeners still imagine the garden into a different place. Huizinga’s conception of boundaries in the realm of ideas is relevant here. This analysis suggests that gardeners imagine ‘as if’ they are somewhere else. Allotment and community gardeners perform the garden into being, performing an immaterial, imaginative boundary between an inside and outside world. In this sense, practices of imagination are thus part of constituting the garden as a playground set apart from everyday life. Yet, guerrilla gardeners radically re-imagine the garden, and instead of drawing imaginary boundaries around gardens, they envision the whole urban environment as a site for gardening.

This contradiction between imaginations of the garden as a tranquil secluded space and everyday negotiations over noises travelling across the garden’s boundaries contribute to this thesis’ understanding that embodied practices of gardening produce paradoxical spaces of play and work. In the next section, I explore things which travel across garden boundaries.

### *5.3 Materialising garden boundaries*

Partly influenced by the works of Huizinga and Caillois, urban researcher Stevens develops the bounded conception of play further and argues that the boundaries of public spaces enable play by creating:

*...a special place apart from the everyday life of the city. Such marginal places may be difficult to access and may be out of sight; they may have their own distinct social and environmental characteristics. This separation facilitates people’s escape from functional activities and normal perceptions and from behavioural regulation by others. With such seclusion, people can indulge in new kinds of experiences and transgressive behaviour. (Stevens 2007b)*

In the following, by dissecting gardeners' material practices of boundary making, I examine Stevens' characteristics of distinct public time-spaces of play: limited accessibility, reduced visibility and social and environmental distinctiveness. Similarly to the previous section, I reveal how gardeners work hard to maintain the idea of the garden as a secluded peaceful place, and I show that the material boundaries between the garden and the city are nevertheless continually breached. As different types of gardening have different kind of boundaries, unlike for the previous thematic analysis I have chosen to structure the following discussion in three subsections, one for each case study.

### **5.3.1 Allotment garden**

One way in which the boundary between the allotment site and its surroundings is materialised is illustrated by the following quote from the go-along with Paul, an allotment holder and the site secretary. He talks me through the introduction of a hedgerow as a response to vandalism and the theft of belongings by local youths:

*And we also planted hedgerow on most of the – down the bottom we've got about 1000 metres of fencing on the playing fields, but in 2001 we actually brought some bare root hawthorn, quick thorn plants. We planted those and now we have a very, very effective hedgerow. It just stops them dead in their tracks, they can't get through. ... And also it does two things...security...it also acts as a kind of a green corridor as well for wildlife. Because I've noticed now we have got nesting birds in the timber hedge.*

The 'them' in this extract from the go-along with Paul refers to several instances of local youths allegedly leaving rubbish on the site and vandalising allotment holders' belongings. Thieves have also stolen expensive tools from the sheds. As well as urging the local council to respond to the youths, the allotment site committee decided to strengthen the site's boundaries. The hedgerow was planted by a small group of volunteers and was financed from the maintenance budget the allotment community receives from the local council and which is managed by the site secretary. When Paul shows me the hedgerow, he mentions that the sports centre that owns and manages the area on the other side of the fence did not want to have any bushes or trees planted. He thinks this is a pity, because it would have provided a much 'thicker border'.



Nevertheless, the hawthorn has grown quickly and is now a fully grown hedgerow which hides the fence and acts as a green corridor between the allotment site and its surroundings. As the quote illustrates, Paul believes that the hedgerow has been effective in limiting access to the allotment site and so has prevented further vandalism. According to Paul, since the introduction of the hedgerow, allotment holders have complained less about rubbish and stolen and broken tools, although they now comment instead on how the expanding hedgerow scratches their cars. However, tenants' opinions about access to the allotment site for cars vary.

Allotment gardener Allan confirms Paul's observations that the boundary has prevented vandalism by limiting access and making the site less visible. Here he recalls an afternoon of local youths running amok just across the hedgerow:

*...the other day, in the evening, Kate and I were here. And there were people on the other side. Vandalising. Doing damage. People were trying to build something there, and there was a group of children, teenage ones, running around, pulling fences down, throwing things. You could hear them smashing things, you know. And the fence and the screen of trees: perfect. Because I know it sounds sad, but it's just the way society is. At the moment, the kids are on the other side there. They can't see this. They don't understand it. And even if they look here, in this direction, they can't see the beauty of this. All they can see is what they've got on the other side.*

Allan is quite happy with the established boundary, as it helps to prevent vandalism. But he also talks about how the hedgerow represents a gap in understanding between the 'youths' hanging around and the allotment gardeners. Allan is saddened that there is a need for this sharp boundary, but he believes this is the way society functions nowadays.

Besides limiting the visibility and accessibility of the site, the hedgerow functions as a habitat for wildlife. Thus, while this physical boundary limits contact between humans, it encourages the nonhuman life of plants and animals.

To further unravel who materialises the boundaries around the allotment site and how, I look at the tenancy agreement. This document, written by the local council, outlines the

responsibilities of both the council and tenants. Section 9 states that the council is responsible for ‘maintenance to a reasonable standard of allotment infrastructure (including common paths, drainage, water supply) and site boundaries (including fences, trees, gates etc.)’. The site’s boundaries are thus part of the institutional responsibilities, which I believe shows that the conception of the allotment garden as an enclosed space is legally embedded. The tenancy agreement reinforces distinct, sharp boundaries between the allotment site and its immediate urban surroundings. The document further makes explicit that part of the site’s boundaries are gates, trees and fences.

Secondly, the tenancy agreement also outlines tenants’ responsibilities. Section 10.6, ‘Boundary structures’, includes the following paragraph:

*(a) To use best endeavours to protect all hedges, fences, boundaries or gates in the allotment site of which the Allotment Garden forms part (‘The Allotment site’) or in adjoining land and any notice-board which has been or may at any time during the tenancy be erected by the Council on the Allotment Garden or the Allotment site.*

The tenants thus share the responsibility to protect the hedges, fences, boundaries and gates of the allotment site. This tenancy agreement requires allotment gardeners to respect and maintain the site’s boundaries.

In addition to the hedgerow and fences along the allotment site, there are two gates in place that provide access to the space and which are thus another way of materialising the boundary between the inside and outside of the time-space of urban gardening. There are locks installed on the gates that can be opened with a specific key which is only given to tenants, and they are asked to always close the gate and lock it when they access the site. At the beginning of the fieldwork, I was dependent on allotment gardeners to open the gate to allow me to access the site. Only following several meetings with the site secretary and after receiving official permission from the allotment committee did I receive a key, which I was given on the grounds that I was acknowledged as a researcher and that it would help me with my fieldwork. This furthermore highlights that the site is not easily accessible to the public. Locks and gates limit

the site's accessibility, and people passing by cannot just wander in and have a look at the plot and chat with the gardeners. Only if one has family or friends renting a plot can one be granted access. Therefore, the allotment site cannot be spoken of as a fully public space.

Yet, there is an opening in the spatial boundary of the gate and its locks. Every Sunday morning the gates are opened and the public can access the site without asking for explicit permission. Thereby, the spatial boundary becomes more of a temporal condition. According to Paul, the site secretary, there is a lot of dissatisfaction about this policy amongst the gardeners. Yet, he views the site as an asset for the wider community and sees the opening of the gates on Sunday mornings as a way of engaging with the local community. By doing this, the allotment site becomes entangled with the rhythms of the week. For the majority of people in London, Sunday morning is a day of rest. Sunday morning is probably chosen as the time for opening up to the public because there are a lot of allotment gardeners present at the site then, while the majority of the public have a day off and are thus also able to visit the site.

So far I have described three ways in which boundaries are materialised by allotment gardening practices: planting a hedgerow, the tenancy agreement and the locking of the gates. Here, I want to briefly discuss two rather invisible boundaries which are constituted through the infrastructure of the allotment site. First of all, the allotment site is not connected to the sewage system; it does not have an official public toilet. According to the site secretary, it would be nearly impossible to install a fully functioning flushing toilet connected to the sewage system. Currently, there are heated debates between tenants about whether a toilet, and what kind, can be realised on the allotment site. Controversially, several allotment holders have installed toilets illegally, containing improvised ways of dealing with human faeces. Council officers have discovered most of these, and the tenants concerned face possible removal from the site. Being unconnected to the sewage system, the allotment site can be understood as an 'island' in the urban fabric, and in fact it is unusual for such a large area in the middle of the city to lack connection to the sewage system. Furthermore, this suggests that the allotment site is conceived of as a space for cultivating the land, not as a place to be idle, spending the whole day at one's plot. If it had been planned as a leisure space, for relaxing the whole day rather than for briefly

working the land, the authorities would have provided toilet facilities. This would have enabled allotment gardeners to easily spend the whole day or even a weekend at the site. Currently, when the gardeners' bodies eventually feel the urge for a toilet visit, they need to either return home or find a toilet in the vicinity.

Second, the allotment site is connected to the Thames Water network. Allotment gardeners use water from the taps to water their crops and enhance growth, and each plot has a dip-tank at the end of its territory. Thames Water ordered an independent research assessment of flood risk to be conducted, which was carried out by an accredited water company. The main conclusions were that all London allotment sites fall into category five, deemed high risk. The site secretary qualified the report as '*very lazy*', because it contained no evidence to justify the assessment. The consequence of being put in category five, the highest risk category, would be that allotment holders would no longer be allowed to use hosepipes. However, allotment societies contested the report's outcome, and at the time the fieldwork was done, the allotment still fell into risk category three. According to the site secretary, category three requires the use of hosepipes with an automatic shut off trigger. This automatic shut off can be seen as a constructed boundary between the 'inside' of the garden, and the 'outside' of the urban water infrastructure.

Yet, the discovery of illegal toilets that may have contaminated the soil, and the current use of potentially toxic commercial pesticides, would mean that the site would definitely fall into category five, which would mean no more use of hosepipes. The site secretary elaborates on this:

*Yeah, it also pushes [us] into the highest flood risk for potential contamination of the domestic water supply. In the event of the catastrophic loss of pressure outside, it could well be that any hosepipe that is running in contact with ground that is contaminated with human faeces, with a loss of pressure, it could suck it all back into the domestic water supply, with untold health issues.*

So the consequence could be the prohibition of the use of hosepipes that are directly connected to taps:

*What would happen is that the taps would have to come off, because they would have to be...To prevent back flow and potential contaminated water, there would have to be an undefeatable non-mechanical air gap between inlet and outlet, which you can't achieve with a tap and a hosepipe connected to it.... Basically, we'd have the dip tanks where the water comes in and then the ball cock maintains a 20mm air gap between the water coming in and the water level in the tank. And then a sluice is cut in the tank, to make sure it doesn't overfill.*

In other words, illegal toilets and commercial, imported chemicals may have contaminated the soil, and as a consequence the allotment ought to fall into flood risk category five. In turn, this would mean the introduction of an air-gap between 'inlet and outlet'. This technology would thus materialise a boundary between the allotment and its surroundings and would also entail a 'hosepipe ban', which according to Paul would 'cause consternation'.

This would especially disconcert the allotment gardeners who use the watering facilities most intensely, among whom are some who also make use of imported commercial chemicals, to preserve their potato harvest for example – the powder prevents potatoes from sprouting. Some of these gardeners also had illegal toilets installed in their sheds. Paul frames it this way when I ask him about it:

*Jan: Yeah. And it happens to be the case that the people that use the hose pipes the most are also, some of them, were also found with toilets?*

*Paul: Yes. And also using imported chemicals, which are not licensed. Which are not the same formulation and concentration. In fact, the point is a lot of the, certainly amongst the Portuguese community. They use the powder, which they put on the potatoes to stop them chipping. That's the powder that's only available for the commercial potato...*

My fieldwork observations largely confirm that it is particularly groups of gardeners who water their plants daily with a hosepipe, and I have seen myself the use of powder to stop potatoes from chitting (sprouting). Yet, I want to be very cautious here, and I do not want to make any claims about groups of gardeners. I want to focus here on how Paul understands the dynamics

of the allotment site and how he and other gardeners make meanings. I will unpack this further in the chapter on socialities.

Thus, allotment gardeners materialise boundaries in four main ways: planting and maintaining a hedgerow, locking the gate, through the tenancy agreement and through multiple (dis)connections to the sewage and water infrastructures. Some of these elements render the site rather invisible from the outside and limit the accessibility of the plots. This confirms Stevens' (2007) remarks quoted above on public spaces for play that 'may be difficult to access and may be out of sight; they may have their own distinct social and environmental characteristics'. The allotment site is also quite particularly situated, having only two direct contacts with public roads, which is unusual for such a large site. The relatively invisibility of the site resonates with Watson's observations that allotments tend to: '...occupy marginal spaces, they back onto the railway track or the canal, are often not visible from the road or are at the back of houses with only a gate onto a street alerting the passers by to their presence' (Watson 2006, p. 113). This discussion of materialising boundaries thus suggests that allotment gardeners are busy keeping the boundaries of the allotment site in place. In other words, they work hard to keep their green playground set apart from its urban surroundings. Unlike Huizinga's conception of the playground, the allotment site's material boundaries are not pre-given, they are worked upon.

Furthermore, due to the allotment gardens' disconnection from the sewage system, some gardeners felt the need to install illegal, hidden and improvised toilets on site. How far the soil has been affected by these illegal toilets remains unclear, but the garden runs the risk of increased limitations on the water supply because it has been rendered polluted. This makes the garden a site of danger for the health and safety of the rest of the city, which contradicts the spatial imagery of the garden as a secluded and safe sanctuary, and thereby contributes to this thesis' understanding of gardens as spaces.

### **5.3.2 Community Garden**

Community gardeners materialise boundaries by maintaining greenery along fences, through the design of the garden entrance and in on-going negotiations with their direct neighbours.

First, I discuss the maintenance of the greenery along the community garden's borders. During volunteering afternoons, I observed that volunteers work regularly on maintaining the greenery that borders the garden. Volunteers are specifically asked by the garden coordinators to use the greenery to make the 'outside' less visible by creating a green corridor. This is because the managers value the green and cared for borders of the site and are keen both on making the neighbouring car park less visible and on making the garden itself less visible to visitors to the street food festival which takes place throughout the summer months.



**Figure 9 Volunteers working on tidying up and guiding plants up the fence**

For example, Figure 9, taken in March 2014, shows three volunteers busy weeding and tidying up the plants along the fence that divides the garden from the neighbouring car park. The volunteers are weaving the plants into the metal fence in preparation for the summer, guiding the plants so they grow in the right direction and won't be troubled by the aggressive bindweed. Bagpuss, one of the volunteers, recalls working on the borders:

*Bagpuss: Ok, then, these trees we've worked on. We cut all these trees back, over here, a few weeks ago. And put some of these up against the wall, up against the gate.*

*Jan: Ah, yes.*

*Bagpuss: I remember doing that.*

*Jan: But why did you do that?*



*Bagpuss: Well, I think what we were trying to do is sort of block it off. So, that we don't see any, and they don't see us.*

Thus, Bagpuss hints at the motivations for maintaining the borders. These have to do with limiting the visibility of the site to the neighbours, and creating something pleasant to look at which also 'blocks it off'. Another instance of maintaining the greenery along the borders of the garden is documented in the series of images in Figure 10, which reiterates the motivations expressed by Bagpuss. As part of the fieldwork, I regularly joined the volunteers in their gardening activities. On one of these Saturday afternoons, the volunteers were asked to plant a shrub next to the fence. I worked on this together with Tijana, who was also volunteering. We dug a hole, put the shrub in, added enough shovelfuls of compost and pressed the soil down so that the shrub was stabilised.



**Figure 10 Volunteers planting a shrub in front of fence**

Colin, one of the garden's managers, had specifically asked us to place it in exactly that spot, because there was a 'gap' in the greenery which made the fence and the neighbours' space more visible. Once the shrub matured it would limit the view of the blank wall from the garden.

Figure 11 illustrates another instance of using trees, shrubs and plants to *green* the borders of the garden and thereby render it less visible to outsiders, as well as creating a space surrounded by greened boundaries to be looked at from within the garden. A construction of bamboo stems rests on the fence and guides a young apple tree in its growth. It will eventually produce green leaves that will limit the view of the neighbouring car park. However, the beer store for the street food festival is clearly visible in this image.



**Figure 11 Apple tree growing along fence; beer storage visible through fence**

Secondly, the way in which boundaries are materialised at the community garden is not necessarily to do with gardening practices, but more with the location and design of the garden entrance and how this plays out in everyday use of the space. The visibility and accessibility of the garden are very much produced by the existence of only one entrance to the garden, and it is often described as being tucked away.



**Figure 12 The front of the garden and its entrance**

As Figure 12 shows, the garden is set back from the pavement. Passers-by often do not notice the community garden, and although the large peace carnival mural is a ‘landmark’ in the neighbourhood, people often live in Dalston for years without noticing that there is a community garden situated just next to it. Community gardener Zeynep is one such person, and she explains: *‘Because this is tucked away I never found it earlier’*. The design of the front of the garden is modest, painted a sober black, but with a large sign stating ‘Dalston Eastern Curve Garden’. The garden is surrounded by the back of a pub and a restaurant, the car park where the street food festival is organised in the summer, studios and galleries situated in old warehouses and the car park of a large Sainsbury’s supermarket. One research participant accurately describes its location: *‘...this patch of land is a bit of an island, isn’t it? Because it’s surrounded on all four sides by built up urban development’* (James, community gardener). Another volunteer (Lilly, community gardener) describes the garden as an *‘enclosed space’*, as constituted through the fencing around the site.

Surrounded by buildings and fences, the garden’s accessibility and visibility is produced by the design and location of its entrance. As can be seen in Figure 12, the entrance is situated right next to the peace mural, and the size of the open door is especially significant here, being similar in scale to an ordinary front door, in both width and height. The garden’s architects could have chosen a larger entrance gate for the garden, but they envisioned it as a small door to encourage the feeling of discovering a place. To the designers, this structure aligns with the

‘feel’ of the neighbourhood, as it produces a certain ambivalence for the user of the space. (S)he might ask: Is this a private space? Can I trespass? What world will be behind the entrance? (Account based on conversation with muf architecture and J&L Gibbons).

James, a community gardener, also points towards the ambivalence he feels when entering the space, and how the door plays a role in making the garden different to an ordinary park:

*This space has a sense of personal ownership about it, which is not Aoife and Colin’s ownership. It’s the people who are in the garden currently, it’s their ownership. Even if you’ve only been here once, you come in, and...maybe it’s because you come through one entrance. And you leave through one exit. And it’s quite narrow, and then the space opens up. I don’t know. It feels like maybe...a room or...a private garden. Maybe, yeah. Everyone, I think, has a sense of ownership when they come in.*

So, according to James, the small entrance produces a space in which there is a sense of personal ownership. His remarks on how the space opens up after passing through the door resonate with other accounts from the community garden, as well as with the descriptions from allotment gardeners which I discussed in the previous section. To return to the role of the door, the community garden site offers other opportunities for access, but these are not used by the public. At the back of the garden there is a huge gate, which can only be opened by the garden’s managers and which is mainly used for the delivery of huge amounts of compost, while a second locked gate provides access to a car park used by the managers. However, there is only one public entrance.

Thirdly, the multiple on-going negotiations between volunteers, garden coordinators, the landowners and the garden’s neighbours materialises boundaries around the site. This is a highly complex field of stakeholders (including the local council), with a wide range of interests and unequal power positions. There is not enough space here for a detailed, comprehensive description of all these negotiations, but I do want to map two areas of tension that co-constitute the site’s material boundaries.

First is the temporal condition of the community garden project. During the fieldwork period, the local council held the view that the garden was a temporary project and that it should be turned into a route connecting the neighbouring square with the open space at the other end of the garden, where the Sainsbury supermarket and the Dalston shopping centre are currently located and which will most probably be redeveloped into apartment blocks with retail functions at street level. This route was defined in the master plan, which was made before the initiatives for a community garden materialised. The community gardeners strongly oppose the introduction of this path, arguing that it would destroy the garden, or at least radically change the way it functions. These are on-going negotiations about whether the garden can continue to exist, and if so in what form. This debate is very much about materialising the boundaries around the site, as there are conflicting conceptions of its future: as an enclosed space functioning as a community garden or as a green route functioning as both a community space and a thoroughfare.

Another area of tension is in ongoing discussions with multiple neighbours about noise, smells and garbage spilling into the garden, for instance with the owners of the neighbouring car park which offers space for the street food festival during the summer months. Visitors to the festival need to buy a ticket to enter, and it attracts huge crowds on sunny days. This crowd, along with the music played, produces a lot of noise, and Aoife and Colin negotiate with both the organisers of the street festival and the council, who provide it with a temporary license. In the following quote, Aoife, the garden coordinator, describes how stressful this negotiation process can be:

*I know we had to spend a lot of time fighting off these people here, and going down and writing letters and going to committee meetings. Try and get them to stop their worst excesses, the same over there. I forgot about all of that in hindsight. And I forgot how stressful that is. And I guess, because you know, I realise we have to fight our corner here, we have to be...we can't allow people to basically dismiss the garden and do things that have a negative impact here. We have to be very forceful in that, but then that's quite*



*stressful. And you don't want to be fighting off people as well. I don't want to be fighting with people!*

Tellingly, Aoife states that 'we have to fight our corner', which illustrates the determination and energy she invests in the process of securing a relatively quiet garden space, which I understand as a form of work. But this does not mean that the relationship with the neighbours is purely agonistic. A new fence has been recently (summer 2015) installed along the border between the car park and the garden. It was designed by James, a volunteer who is a professional landscape architect, and built as a gesture to the community garden in collaboration with Colin and Aoife by a carpenter who normally works on building the bars, temporary kitchens and tables for the street food festival. The new fence is higher than the previous one and is an attempt to make it aesthetically more appealing, as it is made entirely out of timber and has a playful design.

In sum, the community gardeners materialise the boundaries of their site in multiple ways, and thereby co-constitute a garden that attempts to set itself apart from its direct surroundings. Gardeners are busy keeping the boundaries of the garden in place, or in other words they work hard to create a Huizingian version of a garden playground, tucked away, invisible from the outside, green on the inside. I have shown how community gardeners maintain greenery along the fences, discussed the role of the entrance to the garden and reflected upon the on-going negotiations with the direct neighbours. There are clearly similarities in how community gardeners and allotment gardeners actively cultivate the physical boundaries of their garden sites, an example being the parallel between the greening of the community garden's fence and the hedgerow planted by the allotment gardeners.

### **5.3.3 Guerrilla Gardens**

The way guerrilla gardeners approach their garden time-spaces differs from the two practices discussed above. They usually do not obtain official permission beforehand from local authorities or landowners to garden a neglected council bed, a crack in the pavement, a tree pit or an abandoned private garden. Guerrilla gardeners materialise boundaries by using plants, installing fences, choosing locations, introducing signs and collecting rubbish. It is these diverse

approaches that produce the distinctive guerrilla garden time-spaces, the small pieces of land reclaimed by individuals or loose collectives.

First, materialising boundaries can be understood as producing a difference between two neighbouring spaces. Some guerrilla gardeners make their garden sites distinctive through their specific use of plants, shrubs and trees. For instance, Lisa, a guerrilla gardener active in South London, plants *Acanthus*, hollyhocks, *Verbena bonariensis*, Japanese anemone and *Leucanthemum* daisies, among others. These plants form a stark contrast with the neighbouring plants which have been put in by the council. Lisa has heard from several people how her intervention stands out:

*And a lot of people have remarked on the difference between the constrained old fashioned council planting which neighbours what I have done, which is these traditional bedding plants that have been bred for weather-resistance and long-lasting colour, but no nectar at all. Again, you might as well have plastic flowers. It's really annoying! (Both laugh) It's also annoying that they are still in flower and, you know, red or purple. And my plants have dried out. But mine are good for the environment, theirs are useless. (Laughs) Yes, it does look fantastic.*

The above quote also exemplifies Lisa's particular take on guerrilla gardening, as she tries to enhance biodiversity in the city and specifically grow flowers that benefit the urban bee population. She clearly disparages traditional council bedding plants, terming them 'plastic flowers', because they do not contribute to the biodiversity of the urban environment.

Second, another way of materialising a boundary is by making use of existing barriers within the urban infrastructure. When choosing the location for a guerrilla garden site, some guerrilla gardeners pay extra attention to how visible or accessible the site is to passers-by (both humans and animals). Monica, a guerrilla gardener active in Stamford Hill in North London, chose together with her friends to put plants into raised beds or raised planters that would be visible to people passing by, yet, being elevated, would be harder to reach for dogs, with the walls providing an extra barrier (see Figure 13). Because they were trying to grow edible plants,



Monica and her group of guerrilla gardeners tried to reduce the chances of dogs defecating on their garden sites: *‘If you’re going to plant food and you want people to harvest it, it’s nice to know that the dogs don’t – hopefully don’t pee in it too much anyway’*.



**Figure 13 Guerrilla garden sites in Stamford Hill**

Third, like community and allotment gardeners, some guerrilla gardeners use fencing to materialise boundaries. In response to plants being stolen, Karin, a guerrilla gardener in Hornsey in North London, used plastic and metal fencing to prevent this from happening again. This resembles the practices of the allotment gardeners who planted a hedgerow to prevent theft from recurring. Figure 14 shows the plastic fence she and her guerrilla gardening collective put up to protect a small patch along the wall of a large shopping centre. It also shows a neglected

council planter which they take care of, with green chicken wire covering the marigolds to protect them from vandalism.



**Figure 14 Guerrilla garden sites in Hornsey Road, various fencing**

Fourth, some guerrilla gardeners put up signs to show that they are looking after a particular patch of greenery, thereby materialising a boundary and urging passers-by to take care of the green intervention.



**Figure 15 Guerrilla garden site along the canal in Tower Hamlets**

For instance, the guerrilla gardening activities of the Lower Regents Coalition group concentrate mainly on cleaning the canal, but they also plant along the towpath. This collective has put up a sign (see Figure 15), which says: *‘This area has been planted with wild flowers by the Lower Regents Coalition, who are a local volunteer group. Please help us take care of this*



*space by not cutting the flowers or leaving any rubbish. We will be maintaining the area and hope you enjoy the results! Many thanks.'* At the bottom of the paper, the Lower Regents Coalition's contact details and Facebook group are provided. This DIY public sign is an example of a very different approach to that of guerrilla gardeners like Lisa, who prefers not to make use of signs.

Fifth, guerrilla garden sites are far more exposed to passers-by than either community or allotment gardens, as they are situated in very public, open urban spaces. As a consequence, in a city like London these garden sites get piled up with rubbish. Thus, one of the main ways guerrilla gardeners materialise the boundaries between the inside and outside of their sites is by rubbish collection. In a guerrilla gardening dig, a neglected council bed chosen for intervention is first cleared of rubbish before any planting is undertaken, and during my fieldwork with guerrilla gardeners this was the first main thing we undertook. Clearing rubbish is an inherent part of the process of taking care of the flowers one has planted in a neglected council bed. Collecting rubbish defines the size of the garden site and provides the gardener with an understanding of the state of the soil and the growth of the plants.

In short, guerrilla gardeners find their garden sites to be far more exposed to passers-by than either community or allotment gardeners. Consequently, guerrilla gardeners find creative, playful ways to respond to this more vulnerable garden situation. These gardeners materialise boundaries by using plants, installing fences, choosing locations, introducing signs and collecting rubbish. It is these diverse approaches that produce the guerrilla garden time-spaces, the small pieces of land re-claimed by individuals or loose collectives. I thus suggest that guerrilla gardeners perform playful tactics to cultivate small pieces of greenery in the midst of the hustle and bustle of the city. Furthermore, guerrilla gardeners radically re-envision everyday urban spaces by seeing them as spaces for planting and cultivating plants and using them in this way. It is this imagination that alludes to Huizinga's understanding of play; guerrilla gardening thinks of the city *as if* it is large collective garden space. Yet, the above analysis has also shown that guerrilla gardeners continuously negotiate for the future of their garden interventions. Not

unlike allotment and community gardeners, there is hard work involved in making their urban garden spaces.

## Summary

In this section, I have argued that gardeners are occupied by introducing the physical boundaries of the garden and keeping them in place. I have found that allotment and community gardeners in particular enact time-spaces that are very specific in how they can be accessed, with the allotment site being accessible to the public only on Sunday mornings and the community garden being tucked away and accessible only through a small door. Guerrilla gardeners, on the other hand, occupy spaces that are marginal yet very accessible to the urban public, and so they develop multiple ways of materialising boundaries to make urban gardens. In terms of visibility, the practices of planting and maintaining a hedgerow and siting greenery along the fences make both the allotment site and the community garden less visible from the outside. In doing this, urban gardeners try to constitute an enclosed space that seems to resemble Stevens' (2007b) study of the boundaries of public spaces. This furthermore shows that gardeners consider the material boundaries of the garden to be an important way to ensure a peaceful, secluded place. In other words, gardeners' material boundary making practices are attempts to create a distinct time-space of play, a playground set apart from the city (Huizinga 1950).

However, these findings also complicate the conception of the distinct time-space of play, as things travel across the boundaries of the garden continuously—things such as vandalism, cars, water, smells and noise. This shows that the garden is not set apart from the city; it is very much embedded in it, in constant negotiation with its urban surroundings. These findings further demonstrate that the garden is not a given space, but rather that there is a lot of work involved in creating the playground for a pleasurable gardening experience.

## *Conclusions*

In this chapter I have addressed the second research sub-question: *How do the embodied practices of gardening create distinct time-spaces for play and/or work?* The analysis suggests that gardening practices make allotment, community and guerrilla gardens that both confirm

and challenge the historical conception of the garden as an enclosed space of escape and tranquillity. Furthermore, embodied practices sometimes enact distinct spaces of either work or play, but more often than not the boundaries between the categories get broken down. Rather than understanding these boundaries as fixed and closed, I argue for boundaries to be conceived as being continuously in the making and constantly being crossed. This chapter has identified three types of boundary making practices: affective, imaginative and material, and these modes of making urban gardens are interconnected.

To start, I discussed how gardeners become absorbed in their gardening practices, and how this embodied zoning out confirms ideas of play. As gardeners engage intensely with plants, performing repetitive body movements, they experience a state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1990), in which distinctions between self and the environment dissolve. Gardeners enjoy this particular affective zone, and some understand it as having therapeutic effects. By showing the expressive qualities of these intense embodied practices, I extend here Crouch (2010a) and Degen et al.'s (2010) work on inhabiting green spaces. Thus, embodied practices enact a quite distinct time-space of play, alluding to Huizinga's notion of play as captivating and affective.

This distinctiveness is challenged by gardeners' repeated efforts to maintain the peace and calm of the garden. Although gardeners talk about the garden as a paradise on earth, they are also involved in constant negotiations to maintain this precious spatial imaginary of the garden undistorted. These imaginative practices of boundary making signify attempts to make the garden a secluded safe space set apart from the chaos and violence of urban life. Guerrilla gardeners, however, radically re-imagine the garden, opening it up and seeing the whole city as a space for growing plants. These contradictions between the performed discourse of the spatial imaginary of the garden and everyday experiences of planes flying overhead enhance cultural geography's understanding of gardens as spaces productive of ambiguities of nature versus culture and urban versus rural.

Participants' material boundary making practices render garden sites more or less invisible from the outside and limit their accessibility to the public. This confirms Stevens'

observation that urban spaces for play ‘may be difficult to access and may be out of sight; they may have their own distinct social and environmental characteristics’ (Stevens 2007b).

However, this analysis shows that gardeners work hard to make these physical boundaries, while they are continuously negotiating crossings of boundaries by vandalism, loud noise, unpleasant smells and water. Mediated partly by the requirements of the tenancy agreement, allotment gardeners materialise the boundaries around their site in multiple ways—by planting and maintaining a hedgerow, by locking the gate and through (dis)connections with the sewage and water infrastructures. Similarly, community gardeners cultivate planting along the boundaries of their garden to create a border which is pleasant to look at but which also blocks curious gazes from the neighbouring street food festival. They are also engaged in on-going negotiations with their neighbours – the private land-owner and the council – to ‘fight their corner’ and ensure a more or less quiet garden in the present and the continuation of the meeting of people and plants in the future. In addition, the location of the community garden, tucked away from the street, makes it less visible to passers-by, while the design of the entrance, which resembles a standard sized front door, makes for a dramatic entrance to the green community space. In contrast to allotment and community gardens, guerrilla gardens are very exposed to passers-by, because their patches are situated in very publicly accessible and often very visible urban spaces. Consequently, guerrilla gardeners find creative, playful ways to respond to this more vulnerable garden situation. But perhaps most importantly, guerrilla gardeners contest the idea of the garden as an enclosed space by working with a spatially distributed garden, connected only through their embodied planting and maintenance efforts. Guerrilla gardeners often re-envision the whole urban area as a site for gardening.

Thus, these multiple and diverse boundary making practices demonstrate that gardens are made through their relations with the ‘outside world’. If we think of the urban garden as a playground, it is one that is not fixed but continuously in the making. It is defined and redefined in the process of negotiations between people, plants and the urban surroundings. Rather than drawing lines around the garden and thinking in terms of a division between outside and inside, it is more productive, as Massey suggests in her text *A Global Sense of Place*, to think through

‘the particularity of linkage to that “outside” which is therefore part of what constitutes the place’ (Massey 1991, p. 155). This chapter has tried to examine some of the particular linkages that make urban gardens, and Huizinga’s conception of play as affective, imaginative and spatially and temporally bounded has provided productive ways of thinking through the processes of making places. Contrary to these bounded, distinct time-spaces of play and work, these findings about how things constantly travel across garden boundaries and how these places are constituted through their particular linkages enhance cultural geography’s understanding of the garden as a paradoxical space (Rose 1993, Longhurst 2006) of both play and work.



## Photo-Essay C. Indexing Playful Material Practices

*The fact is, children have a special tendency to seek out any kind of workplace where the work being done quite clearly concerns things. They feel irresistibly drawn to the detritus created by building, gardening, housework, tailoring, or carpentry. In waste products they recognize the face that the material world turns to them and them alone. In putting such products to use they do not so much replicate the works of grown-ups as take materials of very different kinds and, through what they make with them in play, place them in new and very surprising relations to one another. In this way children form their own material world, a small one within the large one, and they do it themselves. (Benjamin 2009, p. 55)*

*Bricolage involves collecting, scavenging, recycling. A detailed knowledge of the geography of the local skips is required. Only in wealthy pockets can fine furnishings be found abandoned in the street. But the bricoleur is a home-maker who also finds new uses for found objects and collages them in space. Re-using products can save money. (Rendell 2010, p. 106)*

Allotment holders make do with the objects that surround them. They collect and re-use them, as Rendell (2010) evokes in the quote above. In these combinations of objects, new uses are found for disregarded bottles, a boot or a scratched CD. These practices allude to a playful engagement with the material world; it is as if these gardeners are like the children ‘drawn to the detritus’, as Walter Benjamin reflects. This photo-essay is an inventory of how allotment gardeners shape unusual constellations of objects, and in so doing create new meanings and uses for objects. Many of these interventions by allotment holders are prompted by the search for ways to help their crops grow, but I argue that this visual documentation shows that these new constellations exceed pure functionality, and thereby speak of the playfulness involved in the practice of gardening. On the following pages I have indexed these playful material practices and ordered them in playful, loose categories. This mode of investigation takes inspiration from Latham and McCormack’s (2004) discussion of thinking spaces in fieldwork and the works of artist Marjolijn Dijkman (2011) and photographer Michael Wolf (2016).

Collected stuff









To be burned









## Stuff on a pole







## Stuff on a pole









Stuff on a pole









## Strawman















Rattling sound











## Chapter 6. Cultivating Socialities: Encounters in Urban Gardens

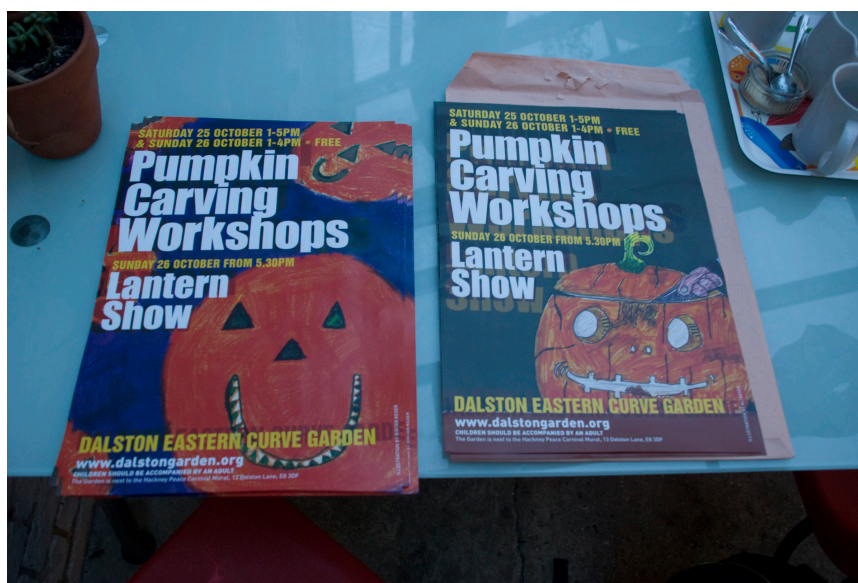
In this chapter, I attempt to unravel the social relations which are made, cultivated, neglected and unmade in the urban garden. Encounters provide the conceptual device to study these processes of cultivating socialities in the garden, of negotiating the throwntogetherness of the urban. The previous two chapters have already suggested that gardening practices break down the clear distinctions between play and work. Chapter 4 showed how gardening practices enact notions of both play and work and illustrated how these become entangled in multiple ways. In addition to evoking the visceral enjoyment of gardening and highlighting the importance of achievement, Chapter 4 also argued that the social, material and legal responsibilities and obligations of gardening complicate the understanding of play as being free and voluntary. Chapter 5 then further unpacked the paradoxical space of play and work, discussing affective, imaginative and material boundary making practices. It demonstrated that the boundaries between play and work are not fixed and closed, but permeable and continuously being made. This chapter now focuses on the socialities of gardening and how they enhance our understanding of the relations between play and work as enacted in urban gardens, thus addressing the third research subquestion: *How do encounters among and between humans and non-humans, taking place during gardening, cultivate socialities in the city?* Thus, I explore how the work of cultivating public gardens translates into the cultivation of relationships with strangers, passers-by, volunteers, neighbours and importantly also nonhumans.

As I discussed in Chapter 2, I understand that the urban condition presents a challenge to allotment, community and guerrilla gardeners, as they have to negotiate the throwntogetherness of public spaces (Massey 2005). Gardens are produced by on-going negotiations between humans and nonhumans, fostering and neglecting social relations that are often conflicting and unequal. This chapter shows that cultivating the garden implies encounters with others, and that these processes of meeting between humans and nonhumans involve both surprise and conflict (Ahmed 2000) as well as being mediated by race, ethnicity, class, gender,

sexuality and culture (Watson 2006). Bhatti et al.'s (2009) research on private gardens suggested that cultivating the garden can be transformed into cultivating the self and cultivating relationships with friends, family and non-humans, this chapter extends this notion into public gardens. Cultivating socialities is here understood through the lens of encounters, of which I discuss four forms: festive, chance, care-taking and contestation.

## 6.1 Festive Encounters

Festive encounters produce intense socialities, have a distinctive temporality and transform spaces, and I understand these social interactions as a site of play. During the fieldwork, I observed and took part in several feasts and social gatherings which recalled Huizinga's observation about the close relation between feasts and play: *'...both proclaim a standstill to ordinary life. In both mirth and joy dominate, though not necessarily—for the feast too can be serious; both are limited as to time and place; both combine strict rules with genuine freedom'* (Huizinga 1950, p. 22). In the following, I explore various manifestations of these festive encounters: pumpkin carving at the community garden, a harvest barbecue at the allotment garden and a guerrilla garden dig.



**Figure 16 Posters for the Pumpkin Carving Workshops designed by garden volunteers**

*When I arrive at the Eastern Curve Garden it is very crowded for a Sunday afternoon at the end of October. The place is bustling with children and parents because the yearly Pumpkin Carving Workshop is going on. I hear shrieks of joy. The atmosphere is overwhelming. All around me I see children and adults sitting and standing behind long tables with pumpkins and all kinds of tools on them. They are using markers to draw Halloween inspired monsters on the pumpkins. Then, under the guidance of garden volunteers and parents, the children use small knives to carve the figures. Garden volunteer Samantha and coordinator Aoife stand in the middle of this organised mess, trying to manage the influx of people into the garden. The workshop started at one o'clock, but by three o'clock they had run out of pumpkins for the workshop, so Samantha is making a waiting list for the new people coming in and trying to soothe the anger of a few parents who fear their children are missing out. The garden is asking parents for a one pound donation to take part in the workshop. Meanwhile, Aoife is frantically discussing with Colin where and when he can get more pumpkins for the workshop. There are about 10 volunteers helping out today, a mix of regular garden volunteers and friends of these regulars. I walk around, bumping into a lot of familiar faces, regular volunteers and visitors to the garden. I chat, admiring the carving, and I have a bite of Darren's freshly baked kale pizza from the garden's wood-fired oven. Time goes quickly, and dusk sets in. The carving is finished, and all the participants are encouraged to find a nice spot in the garden for their pumpkins. Small candles are distributed, and the carved pumpkins are lined up in rows along the path and hidden in corners and in between plants. The candles are lit, it's a magnificent sight. The darkness is pierced by glowing orange dots coming from the carved pumpkin monsters. Children are still walking around, playing and chasing one another, excited by the workshop and the garden. Parents talk with each other, and many of them take pictures of the pumpkin creations in the garden.*

This vignette illustrates how the garden becomes a hive of activity and joy, as well as frustration for some, during the October weekend of the Pumpkin Carving Workshops Figure 16. For

garden coordinator Aoife, this punctuates the garden year and is the most intense weekend in the garden. Aoife recalls the Sunday afternoon: *'it was already entering into its crescendo of craziness. No, it was fantastic! I mean it's one of those weekends you see the best of people and the worst of people. It's my favourite weekend here. But you can, towards the end, especially as resources are running scarce – pumpkins – you start to see some quite bad behaviour, where we were being crowded, myself and Samantha, by all the parents in need of a pumpkin. And it was just getting a bit crazy then, but you know, when they are all lit up...and people...love it'*. Aoife describes the intensity and festivity of the pumpkin carving workshop; for her as a coordinator it is both the most enjoyable and the most stressful weekend of the year. Thus, the creativities and materialities involved in the carving workshop create a festive atmosphere which transforms the garden space in the evening. Moreover, the workshop attracts a mixed crowd of parents and children, both regulars and first time visitors, who enjoy both carving and chatting and cracking jokes. Moreover, the timing of the workshop marks and celebrates the autumn season. This intense sociality, this distinct temporality and transformed spatiality, resonates with Huizinga's ideas about play and the feast.

Another example of festive encounters taking place in gardens is the harvest festival at the allotment garden:

*Towards the end of September, my partner and I join the barbecue, which the allotment site committee have organised as a way to celebrate harvest time and get together with the allotment tenants. That Sunday morning, we have baked pancakes to bring along for the shared lunch. When we arrive at the allotment, we bump into Pete and have a chat with him. A bit further along the site, we find a group of allotment gardeners sitting around three large tables just next to the 'trading shed'. Everyone has prepared some food to share, and this is laid out on a large table. Just a few examples of the dishes are: Robert's terrific brown buns, Darren's delicious tomato salad, Paul's partner's tasty carrot cake, Paul's own pumpkin soup and Svetlana's Russian salad. We add our pancakes to the table and fill our plates. Whilst enjoying the food, I look around, seeing mostly familiar faces I have got to know over the year of fieldwork along with a few new*

*faces, making about fifteen people joining in the 'community barbecue'. There is a lot of chatter and laughter, and gardeners share stories about recent holiday trips, the autumn's rich colours and textures, the guerrilla gardening activities of an allotment gardener's daughter and baking cakes and bread. Some allotment gardeners have made a selection of this year's produce from the allotment, which they display in the trading shed, as this gathering is also about celebrating the harvest. The trading shed is normally used to sell seed potatoes and onions, multi-purpose compost, organic weed killer and many more garden products to fellow allotment gardeners. But now the space has been turned into a small exhibition space for fruit and vegetables grown at the allotment. Not only has site secretary Paul carefully curated a selection of this year's harvest (see Chapter 4), but allotment holders Darren and Robert have also put together a neat display of tomato varieties. I am struck by the various shapes and colours of these tomatoes (see Figure 17). During the afternoon, several allotment gardeners happily share their just harvested produce with us, and we have a full bag to take home, containing a pumpkin, black tomatoes and much more. Just before it gets dark, we say goodbye and take the bus home.*

This vignette shows how the harvest festival brings together a group of allotment holders to share food and stories. For several reasons, this was a distinct festive moment during the year of fieldwork. First of all, it produced a specific sociality. Tenants would meet and chat with neighbouring plot-holders on an everyday basis, but I had never before observed such a large gathering of allotment gardeners. A mix of tenants gathered together that afternoon, not all of whom knew each other. It has to be noted that 15 or so people is still a small part of the total of 118 allotment tenants at the site, but the afternoon was distinctive for the multiple encounters, infused with laughter, that took place between gardeners and the delights of eating fresh garden produce together.





**Figure 17 Darren and Robert's tomato harvest display, October 2014**

Secondly, the lush display of garden produce spoke to the idea of celebrating harvest, and transformed the space of the trading shed. Moreover, it seemed to carry traces of traditional vegetable competitions, which are also about bringing gardeners together for an afternoon of

food and drink. There was no official competition or jury at this particular harvest celebration, but the work that some allotment gardeners had put into displaying their vegetables indicates an element of showing off what they had grown that year to the other gardeners. All the vegetables were carefully cleaned of soil and accompanied by hand written notes. This sense of showing off is also evoked in Huizinga's (1950) writings on play and how players compete in games.

Due to both the vegetable display and the variety of food shared, there was an abundance to the afternoon that speaks to the idea of a feast. Thus, similarly to the pumpkin carving event, this social gathering had an intense sociality, a distinct temporality related to celebration of the moment of harvest which transformed the everyday space of the trading shed into an exhibition space in which gardeners could show off their produce.

Turning to festive encounters and guerrilla gardening, I joined in a guerrilla gardening dig as part of 'Elefest', a local cultural festival in Elephant and Castle:

*Together with about twenty-five people, I'm standing on the pavement just next to a busy junction in South London, waiting for the guerrilla garden 'dig' to start. It's a warm dry day in October. Most of us have reserved a free online ticket for this 'event' on the website of Elefest – a local cultural festival. Richard arrives with a shopping cart full of bulbs, shovels and gardening gloves. He says a few words about how he has been guerrilla gardening in the neighbourhood for 8 years now, and points out that it is unusual for a 'guerrilla' action to be a ticketed event. Richard takes the group of festival visitors and gardeners around the area. As we get gloves from Richard's shopping cart and start planting bulbs in raised beds neglected by the council, I talk with the other participants. To my surprise, not many of them live locally; they don't know each other and for most of them it's their first try at guerrilla gardening. This is my first guerrilla dig too, and I find it quite fun. It feels strange and exciting to just start making holes in the soil in public tree pits and raised beds and putting bulbs in. Moreover, there is quite a social atmosphere, and participants who didn't know each other before the event get along easily. People chat, and some passers-by also ask us questions about what we are doing. I notice that this afternoon is as much about*

*documenting the intervention as it is about gardening. Two photographers join the group to take pictures for the Elefest festival, and Richard carries a camera himself, while the participants take photos of each other with their smart phones. In addition, two undergraduate students who are making a documentary about 'subcultures' film us continuously.*

The fun and ease with which strangers interact socially seem to give this account of a guerrilla garden afternoon during a local cultural festival an element of what Simmel (1949) describes as sociability. These encounters, along with the exciting practice of guerrilla gardening, produce a sense of play.

However, these interactions are set within the context of the local cultural festival, a ticketed and publicly advertised event. These conditions are at odds with the term 'guerrilla', as Richard acknowledged. Rather than a collective act of green activism, this afternoon could perhaps be better understood as a fun day out for people who are interested in performing as if they were guerrilla gardeners. Moreover, participants in the dig were quite busy taking pictures of each other, on top of which Richard himself was also making images, as well as two photographers representing the festival and the students filming a documentary. The afternoon was as much about performing in front of the camera lens as it was about gardening. I argue that the sense of play produced by festive encounters thereby becomes more ambiguous.

During the fieldwork, I participated in two other guerrilla digs like the above, and a similar image surfaces from these gatherings. Between a third and half of the people who turned up to Richard's call for a guerrilla gardening afternoon had a professional interest in being present, being journalists, students or professionals in urban green space management. Instead of joining in the digging, most of these participants took out their notepads and cameras to document others doing the gardening. I was aware that as an ethnographer I was part of a similar process; I was also a participant with a professional interest— this PhD thesis. This ambiguity of the play produced at these guerrilla digs was highlighted when, as an ethnographer, I found myself being interviewed by a journalist during a guerrilla-dig, as well as another afternoon when all the participants were followed by a film crew making an item for

Japanese television (see Figure 18).



**Figure 18 Guerrilla gardener being interviewed by a Japanese film crew**

Hence, these observations bring to the fore how participants in the guerrilla dig have fun experimenting with this new gardening practice, and how they enjoy the ease with which they encounter strangers. This all alludes to ideas of play, yet this notion becomes more ambiguous in the context of a formal ticketed event, performances in front of cameras and people present with professional interests. Instead of Huizinga's conception of the feast as a 'standstill to ordinary life' (1950, p. 22), these digs become very much entangled with the everyday reality of paid work, resonating with Rojek's arguments about how forms of play enhance people's capacity for work. I suggest that these particular instances of guerrilla gardening events come close to Simmel's observation that 'as soon as the discussion becomes business-like, it is no longer sociable' (1997, p. 259).

### **6.1.2 Summary**

Gardening practices can thus create opportunities for festive encounters which produce specific intense socialities in the city, which I understand here through the lens of Huizinga's remarks on the relations between play and the feast. At both the allotment and the community garden there is a sense that ordinary life temporarily comes to a standstill, while social interactions are infused with enthusiastic storytelling and the cracking of jokes. Simmel's concept of sociability



also help us to understand these social gatherings, as festive encounters become a form of play due to the ease and joy of social interactions between familiar faces and strangers—as also observed in guerrilla gardening. Furthermore, these festive encounters happen in a distinct temporality which is bound up with the cultural artefacts of Halloween and the harvest season respectively. The spatialities of the garden are also temporarily transformed during festivities, as exemplified by the trading shed becoming an exhibition space and the community garden being lit up by pumpkin lanterns.

Yet, as the vignette of the community garden reveals, these festive encounters are not always without friction—arguments over a shortage of pumpkins reveal how festive encounters can slip into encounters of contestation. The notion of the festive encounter as a site of play is further challenged by the findings from the guerrilla dig, which show how the social gathering becomes instrumentalised by its context as a ticketed cultural festival event. The ambiguity of play is further underlined by participants’ use of visual documentation for professional purposes.

## *6.2 Chance Encounters*

In the following, I discuss how gardeners understand and respond to the ‘possibility of being surprised’ (Massey 2005) whilst they are gardening. As I argued in Chapter 2, embracing moments of chance can be understood as a form of playfulness. Furthermore, cities and their multiplicity of spatial configurations produce the chance of space (Massey 2005). The following is about unplanned, spontaneous, fleeting and unexpected encounters between people, plants and animals, and thereby explores an element of playfulness in how gardeners interact socially. First I discuss chance encounters of ‘bumping into’ and ‘passing by’, following which I address ‘eavesdropping’.

### **6.2.1 ‘Bumping into’ and ‘passing by’**

Community gardener James recalls a chance encounter with a visitor to the garden:



*I remember, a couple of weeks ago there was a lady. I think she was Italian, and she'd been in the garden for the whole time that I'd been, that we'd been working. And then she started to kind of potter around and look at things, and she was near to where I was. So, we started talking about this particular plant. And then...you know, she was obviously enjoying the conversation. So, then, I thought I'd show her some of the highlights of the garden. So, I kind of did a mini-tour for her! And I took her to see, I took her to the pineapple sage...they are in the middle bed down there....And I just said: 'take a leaf of that and then squash it in your fingers and then tell me what you think'. And she was so happy! And you know, and it was really exciting to see. She was trying desperately to...eventually...she said: 'Oh my God, it's pineapple, it's pineapple!'*

This account illustrates a spontaneous joyful meeting between volunteer James and a visitor to the community garden. James's gardening practice offers an opportunity to encounter strangers by chance. After they bump into each other, James invites the visitor to explore the garden together through the senses, touching and smelling the pineapple sage. This particular chance encounter evokes a notion of playfulness, as it produces a moment of surprise, an unplanned meeting between strangers that involves a sensorial exploration, reverberating with Ahmed's (2000) conception that encounters have a certain openness and involve 'surprise'. Furthermore, this instance confirms Stevens' claim that chance encounters 'provide opportunities for escape from predetermined ritualized courses of action' (Stevens 2007b), because James started to talk to a stranger and invited her to smell the scent of the pineapple sage, which surprised and excited her.

Chance encounters between volunteers and other users of the community garden happen quite often. I experienced many of these moments whilst participating in the volunteer group. For instance, a visitor made brief remarks about my watering practice, leading to a conversation about how his/her grandfather used to water the plants in the evenings in Turkey. Visitors also took my arm and asked me about specific flowers in the garden, or simply expressed their praise for the space. These are chance encounters in the sense that they are fleeting, spontaneous,

unexpected meetings between strangers. Furthermore, the spatialities of the community garden carry the potential for many such chance encounters as it is a small, bounded space used by many people. In addition, Saturday afternoon, when the volunteering takes place, is the busiest day of the week in terms of visitors to the garden. This particular timing for the volunteering session increases opportunities for encounters between volunteers and other users of the garden space. I found that volunteers valued these chance encounters and enjoyed these social interactions. I argue that such multiple chance encounters produce a pleasant, playful ‘sociability’ (Simmel and Hughes 1949) at the community garden. These chance encounters are enjoyed for the social interaction itself and are less concerned with purposes beyond socialising itself, thereby they allude to Caillois and Huizinga’s understanding of play.

Furthermore, community garden volunteers expressed that they anticipated being surprised. Volunteer Zeynep expresses this enjoyment of experiencing something new, saying that she thinks about whom she will meet at the garden each week: *‘Because I always, I wonder whom I will meet today’*. In other words, volunteers expect the unexpected, and this paradoxical notion is key for understanding chance encounters between strangers in the garden. I identify that community gardeners have a specific openness for being surprised, a disposition which embraces the uncertainty of meeting others and which is partly produced by the embodied practice of gardening. Gardening as a practice gives volunteers a social reason to dwell in the garden space and moreover makes starting a conversation with a stranger less frightening because they can always return to pulling out the weeds.

However, these chance encounters in the community garden are not limited to volunteers, but also happen between visitors to the space. John spends time in the garden each week, reading, developing business ideas or just relaxing, but mostly he plays his bass guitar. On this he says:

*I just sit out and play in the gardens with headphones on and kids always come up and want to, you know – they’re curious about it, they say, “Oh, guitar”....little kids, two, three four years old, I let them listen on the headphones.... You know, they’re funny....The curiosity. And also, they’re...they have a certain innate instinct for music;*

*a lot of children do. It's fascinating. When I let them listen on the headphones, they start dancing and it's hilarious.*



**Figure 19 John playing bass guitar in Dalston Eastern Curve Garden**

In the above, John articulates a chance encounter between him and some children. As John makes music and the children dance, they generate an unexpected playful social interaction. This produces a rare intergenerational sociality between strangers in the city. In this respect, Watson's discussion of children's publics is relevant in her argument that parents tend to withdraw children from outdoor public spaces because their perceptions of danger in these spaces are shaped by 'a growing discourse of fear and risk...the two main tropes deployed are the fear of attack or sexual assault, lodged at its most dramatic in the figure of the paedophile, and the fear of traffic' (Watson 2006, p. 124). This particular playful chance encounter in the community garden thus contests this general discourse of fear and brings to the fore the fun that both the children and John have in listening to and playing music. This demonstrates that within the particular spatial context of the community garden some parents feel at ease with their children running around freely and interacting with strangers.

In addition, I found that guerrilla gardeners also experience chance encounters involving surprise and alluding to playfulness. The guerrilla gardeners I have studied garden in publicly visible spaces. They claim a space for greenery in the midst of traffic, along busy pavements, in neglected council beds and in disused front gardens. This specific spatiality produces multiple chance encounters between guerrilla gardeners and people passing by. An example of this is guerrilla gardener Monica, who along with her friends cultivated a small neglected council planter in Stamford Hill in North London. When I joined this group of gardeners, I observed several chance encounters between gardeners and passers-by. For instance, a child cycling past on the pavement stopped to ask what plants we had just put into the planter, while a neighbour who had seen us planting came out of her house, surprised and delighted by this small intervention. As she was a keen domestic gardener herself, she went back into her house and brought out a young tomato plant and some pea shoots for the guerrilla gardeners to put into the planter. Monica very much enjoyed meeting this neighbour by chance, and in fact she was so happy that strangers had joined in her guerrilla gardening practice that she referred to the encounter several times in conversations I had with her later. This shows that an accidental meeting between strangers can involve a shared enthusiasm for gardening and a spilling over between domestic and public gardening practices.

For guerrilla gardener Lisa, chance encounters entail both encouraging and unpleasant meetings with strangers. Lisa's mixed experiences with meeting people whilst she is guerrilla gardening in South London evoke Ahmed's (2000) notion that encounters involves both surprise and conflict. Lisa explains that people often comment from their cars:

*Yes! At the level of, just, you know, 'thumbs up', or somebody once said: 'Are you a guerrilla gardener?'. 'Yes, I am!' (Both laugh)...What else did they say...they said things like: 'good work' you know 'looks really good'. And a couple of other people that we never ever managed to... I think... this French woman has actually moved now. But she was like: 'I live close by to that patch, and I really want to get involved, because it looks so good!*

Thus, Lisa often has fleeting encounters with people commenting on her garden work from their cars. This is due to the particular location of the raised bed on a busy road just next to a set of traffic lights. These chance encounters are mostly brief moments of meeting between a guerrilla gardener and people passing by. Yet, occasionally strangers join Lisa in her guerrilla gardening practice:

*...a young woman and her young daughter were admiring the patch. And I said: 'Well, you can always help us! You can always get some water!' There are taps in the car park, because there is a car wash... which is hard work when you've got a full watering can. But you know, they went skipping and got a couple of thrown away bottles and did a little bit of watering. I don't know whether they ever did it again. But at least they did it that evening.*

Lisa's constant guerrilla gardening in the neighbourhood has led to several spontaneous meetings on the street with other gardeners. She tells me that she enjoys meeting people this way: *'People involved in gardening are quite eccentric. So, the characters that I have bumped into doing this have been quite amusing'*. Some of these meetings have also led to *'plant swaps'* and the sharing of compost.

However, not all chance encounters whilst guerrilla gardening are pleasant. Lisa observes a remarkable difference in the comments she receives depending on whether she is working with a female or male friend. In her experience, she receives *'more positive attention'* when she is with a male friend, with passers-by commenting on the *'great work'* they are doing. However, when she is gardening on the streets with a female friend, they get whistled at from cars, which sometimes accelerate aggressively. Lisa finds this *'whistle stuff...tedious'*. Thus, in these chance encounters, gender relations and broader social power relations are reproduced, negotiated and contested. This exemplifies Ahmed's conception that encounters *'between subjects always hesitate between the domain of the particular – the face to face – of this encounter – and the general – the framing of the encounter by broader relationships of power and antagonism'* (Ahmed 2000, p. 9). These particular chance encounters that Lisa recalls carry



the traces of sexism in society and spoil Lisa's fun in guerrilla gardening. Thus at times Lisa's play in guerrilla gardening turns into the hard work of contesting these '*tedious*' sexist gestures.

Allotment gardener Martha gives another example of how chance encounters can involve conflict and the hard work of negotiating gender and power relations. Martha was pushing a wheelbarrow full of woodchips to her plot when she met a small group of '*Italian guys*':

*They were asking me, where I came from, and all this sort of thing. And they said: 'Oh, you don't get many English people here'. They said, they say: 'Bloody foreigners!'*  
*(Both laugh). So, they thought it was odd of me, to want to be here, really, I suppose is what they were saying. And then they started on their own bloody foreigners thing, which was about Albanian people coming to Italy. Where they come from, taking the jobs, and so on and so forth, and not wanting to work etc. So, I had a bit of an argument with them about that, you know, because I was saying the world is changing, and you know, there's no point in thinking things are going to be same as they used to be. People are going to move, and we should enjoy it, ... you know. And I find it very interesting there's all these different people. And they grow artichokes, and tomatoes, and they do it in such a different way. ... But you know, they were also just telling me about how hard it was for them, when they first came here. They now have been here a long time, but you know, basically, how poor they'd been. And how hard they'd worked and ... so on, which was interesting*

In the above, Martha reflects on a chance encounter when she was pushing a heavy wheelbarrow along the allotment site towards her plot, describing how she contested the implications of the Italian guys' '*bloody foreigners*' joke. Her account illustrates that an accidental meeting between allotment gardeners can become a site of everyday politics in which gender relations, racism and nationalism are negotiated. This chance encounter is mediated (Watson 2009) by the allotment holders' intersecting differences in gender, sexuality, socio-economic positions and nationalities, respectively male and female, hetero and homo, working class and middle-class, Italian and English. Martha remembered that the '*Italian guys*' were also

asking her ‘*where is your husband?*’ when she was pushing the heavy wheelbarrow full of compost. Again, this chance encounter hesitates between the particular of the face to face encounter and the framing of the encounter by broader relationships of power and antagonism (Ahmed, 2000), because this throw away question about Martha’s husband is infused with traditional conceptions of gender roles and sexuality in society. By the very act of pushing the wheelbarrow and cultivating her allotment plot together with her female partner, Martha re-constitutes these traditional gender identities as well as contesting homo-normativity. Chance encounters thus contain both the potential to foster mutual understanding and friendship and an element of risk, as the argument about migration could have resulted in a serious conflict between the allotment gardeners. In this respect, the playfulness of interacting socially becomes more ambiguous because the ‘tension and uncertainty to the outcome’ (Huizinga, p. 47) of play, one of the elements that makes it enjoyable, can also imply disturbing and unpleasant emotions.

### **6.2.2 Eavesdropping**

Apart from practices of bumping into and passing by, I have also found eavesdropping practice to be a particularly playful form of chance encounter—evoking a sense of theatricality (Caillois 1961, Watson 2009) and an appreciation of sociability (Crewe and Gregson 1998). Community gardening volunteer Neil recalls a previous volunteering session in which he and I were harvesting raspberries whilst listening to a group of teenage girls

*...really being teenagers. They were talking about which parties they went to, and who they saw, and what cocktail they had... It’s actually quite amusing to listen to their conversations as much adults as we are!*

This group had been sitting just next to a raised bed of raspberries in the garden where Aoife the garden coordinator had sent Neil and me to tidy up the bushes and pick the fruit. In the go-along, Neil said that when he does gardening he feels that he is not noticed by other users of the garden, or they seem not bothered by his presence:

*A couple of times I’ve been here, and you’re standing less than a foot away from a couple having a really serious discussion or even a break-up. I was trimming the*

*rosemary there, and there was a couple breaking up, right next to me. But they just ignored me. I think we mentioned last week about service people in gardens. The gardener or the postman or the street cleaner, people just don't see it. They just carry on with their normal life, even if they wouldn't do it when someone else was standing there. It's the service person. They just don't see you. And it's quite fascinating to see what you can overhear.*

Neil finds it 'amusing' to overhear some of these conversations in the garden, saying that because he is doing the gardening other users of the garden probably perceive him as a 'service person', which makes him socially invisible. He clearly enjoys bending his ears to some of the conversations going on in the garden space, which alludes to a certain naughtiness, a testing out of social norms. Caillois' conception of play and theatricality helps us to understand Neil's practice of eavesdropping; volunteering in the garden, Neil 'imagines that he is someone else', temporarily satisfying the 'desire to assume a strange personality' (Caillois 1961, p. 44). Neil performs the role of a service person in the garden, making him socially invisible and enabling him to listen in to strangers' conversations.

Another example of how the embodied practice of gardening offers the opportunity to hear other garden users is given by community garden volunteer Arthur. When asked about eavesdropping, he replies that he '*would eavesdrop, yes (laughs), quite consciously*'. Later in the go-along interview, he expands on this practice:

*Well, just watering them on a very consistent basis. I mean, all these plants over here I used to water in a very dedicated fashion. And it was nice to on the one hand water but then also – it was a time when I could listen to what other people – you know, this is a place where people gather, isn't it? So it was nice to have that mixture of doing things but at the same time hearing what people were talking about. Just the human voices, not really listening but hearing.*

The above quote makes clear that Arthur not only enjoys the practice of watering the plants, but also hearing the human voices speaking in the place. It is doing the gardening that brings him

physically close to other users of the garden and creates moments when he can hear others talk. Here he makes a crucial distinction between hearing human voices and listening to the talk. As mentioned above, earlier in the go-along Arthur expressed that he would eavesdrop, laughing as soon as he says this, which can be interpreted as a sign of a certain discomfort in admitting listening to others in public spaces. This moment of laughter also happened in the go-along with Neil, when he and I recalled listening to the conversations of a group of teenage girls whilst gardening at a previous volunteering session. This is not something one is supposed to do, but garden volunteering work enables one to play with these social conventions.

The joy that Arthur expresses in hearing human voices in the garden points to a pleasure in dwelling in a social space and suggests that he enjoys the ‘sociability’ of the garden. These findings extend similar observations made about the sociability of London street markets (Watson 2009) and car-boot sales (Crewe and Gregson 1998). Moreover, I suggest that the embodied practice of gardening (in the specific site of the community garden) produces the place from which one can bend one’s ears to others engaging in conversations. Eavesdropping means to listen secretly to a conversation and derives from the early 17th century noun ‘eavesdropper’, meaning ‘a person who listens from under the eaves’ (Oxford Dictionary, 2010), with ‘eaves’ referring to ‘the part of a roof that meets or overhangs the walls of a building’ (Oxford Dictionary, 201). Eavesdropping as a word thus indicates a spatial practice, and is used to describe people who listen to others talk from a location where they will not be noticed by those talking. Thus, I use the expression ‘to eavesdrop’ here to describe the practice of listening in to conversations of others in the garden whilst busy with the gardening itself. Neil bends his ears to a couple having a really serious discussion from a close yet invisible site. This socially invisible and accepted site, the eaves, is produced through his practice of trimming of the rosemary. Unlike binary conceptions of play and work, eavesdropping as chance encounter demonstrates how these contradictory notions co-exist within the same space, as it contains elements of doing garden work as well as the play of temporarily performing a different self.

My data contains no similar accounts of eavesdropping in the practices of allotment and guerrilla gardeners, which might be due to the very different spatial conditions of these garden spaces. The space of the allotment site is not used as intensely as the community garden site; in other words, there is not the same density of people inhabiting the space, and many fewer non-gardening visitors come to the site, making it much less likely that such chance encounters will take place. The guerrilla gardeners I have studied do not cultivate sites that are very crowded with other people who spend a long time there. These sites are often situated alongside traffic flows, and most guerrilla garden pockets are not located next to spaces where people spend a long time chatting with each other. Yet, as the spaces are situated alongside people in transit, multiple chance encounters do occur, which I discuss in a different section of this chapter. To conclude, in comparison with the other two gardening practices, the community garden enacts a very specific social space that permits eavesdropping practices and allows enjoyment of the sociability of hearing human voices.

### **6.2.3 Summary**

Throughout the above analysis, I have unpacked multiple types of chance encounters, helping me to develop a conceptualisation of playfulness as involving an openness to chance, surprise and the unexpected. Instead of blocking themselves off, the gardeners discussed above open themselves up to the contingencies of practicing gardening in public spaces. They enjoy bumping into strangers, interacting with passers-by and eavesdropping on others. I am inspired here by Pisac's ethnography and her reflections on the playful disposition she identified in the socialities of a card-game, which in her words encompassed: 'acceptance of contingency, innovation and ability to influence social processes' (Pisac 2013, p. 99). Throughout the above discussion, I have also shown how chance encounters involve risk; there is a tension to the outcome as gardeners open themselves up to encountering human and more-than-human others. These encounters hesitate between the particular of the face-to-face encounter and broader power relations—I think here of gender roles, normative sexualities and racism (Ahmed 2000). Thus, as much as socialities of play are cultivated in chance encounters during gardening—here understood as being situated within ongoing encounters—social relations are also unmade.



### 6.3 Care-taking Encounters

As Bhatti et al.'s (2009) research on private gardens suggests, cultivating the garden can mean at the same time cultivating oneself and one's relationships with friends, family and non-humans. In this section, I build upon this notion of cultivating social relations in the garden and extend it by suggesting that, encounters in which urban gardeners take care of both humans and nonhumans, which I refer to as 'care-taking encounters', produce notions of both more-than-human play and care-work. I examine how some allotment gardeners take care of foxes, and how writing a guerrilla garden blog fosters relationships with family. There were also multiple manifestations of care-taking encounters at the community garden, but due to limited space I have chosen to focus on these examples from allotment and guerrilla gardening.



**Figure 20 A fox appears from the bushes**

During my fieldwork, I engaged with several older allotment gardeners who were taking care of foxes, and I believe that each had a specific fox that they 'looked after'.

Allotment gardener Jasna talked about these men:

*...years ago, when I first started seeing foxes here. I thought that the blokes here would shoot them, or kill them, or something like that. And I have found that completely the opposite was true. And that, I think, that at one stage, when the fox had mange, Paul brought some antibiotics up and crushed them into some dog food and fed the fox*

*antibiotics until the mange went away! (Both laugh) All of them, especially the Greeks up here, the ones that I know. They feed it. They like it. They really like it. And they take care of it. Which I think is nice.*

Jasna depicts long term engagements between allotment gardeners and foxes, which to her were unexpected. Using Haraway's vocabulary, I recognise in these patterns of relations between humans and more-than-humans a 'becoming with' (Haraway 2008, p. 25) in the situated naturecultures of the allotment site. In recurring encounters with foxes, these allotment gardeners bring unexpected relationships between species into being in the urban space. This sense of cultivating the garden and at the same time cultivating relationships with the self and foxes is evoked in the following vignette about allotment gardener Pete:



**Figure 21 Fox on Pete's allotment plot**

*It is February, a winter morning at the allotment site. Whilst Pete and I chat about the poor weather of the last few weeks, a fox approaches us. Pete is excited. He plays with the fox and uses his black textile bag to interact with it, waving it from left to right, trying to encourage the fox to come closer. The fox looks and comes a bit closer, but stays some distance away. I am moved by this scene of familiarity between the fox and Pete. At 95, Pete is the oldest allotment holder on site, and he has cultivated his two plots ever since he retired at the age of 64. It's an occupation for him: 'You can't do*

*nothing, you've got to do something'. He is a widower, and he used to have five brothers.*

*Each morning he comes to the allotment site on the W4 bus, and as soon as he gets close to his plot the fox approaches him. Pete usually feeds the fox leftovers from the meat he cooked the day before: maybe chicken, beef, liver, sausages or pork pies. According to Pete, the fox only eats part of the meat straightaway, burying the rest in small holes spread over the allotment site. In times of hunger, the fox will dig these pieces up and eat them. When he brought in four pork pies, Pete told me: 'And he knows I've got four for him. The fox can only take two pies in his mouth. So, when I put the two pies on the ground he picks them up and then returns, because he knows there's more coming'. This illustrates that the fox and Pete have become attuned to each other, that they're sustaining some sort of relationship.*

*Pete cares for the fox, and the fox can often be found close to Pete, sitting next to him when he's working the plot—as allotment gardener Ben told me. The sense of care-taking maybe comes across most strongly in Pete's act of feeding the fox liver to which he had added antibiotics, 'to keep him fit'. By giving the fox medicine, Pete expresses concern for the fox's health, but he actually disturbs the fox's wellbeing because the animal is not used to receiving such drugs.*

*Sometimes though, the fox does not turn up, and Pete is left with the food in his bag. He wonders where the fox is and whether he's fighting with some other foxes somewhere. One day when I met Pete he had a bag full of sausages, but no fox appeared, I sensed a sadness in his voice.*

For these older men taking care of foxes, like Pete, the regular rhythm of cultivating their allotment plots is tied up with taking care of a particular fox, which brings them a purpose in life, a certain kind of joy, but sometimes also sadness. Feeding foxes contradicts their concern for producing vegetables and fruit because the on-going presence of foxes on site can actually affect the growth of the plants, as fox excrement does not encourage the growth of plants.

Moreover, foxes burying the abundant meat that is being fed to them might be detrimental to the soil that the vegetables and fruit grow in, and furthermore decreases the foxes' appetite for hunting rodents, which would be beneficial for the plants' growth. Hence, these care-taking encounters with foxes are irrational in terms of successfully growing crops and go against the gardeners' own allotment practices—demonstrating a playful mode that defies instrumental thinking and action (Huizinga 1950). These unexpected social relations developed between the supposedly wild fox and humans can thus be qualified as playful as they are irrational in terms of producing fruit and vegetables and also undermine the boundaries between the 'wild' animal and humans. Foxes do not 'need' to be fed as if they are pets, but these allotment gardeners challenge these conventions. For all these reasons, I understand these encounters of care-taking as a site of play, while this pattern of 'becoming with' foxes at the allotment site is a form of play.

At the same time though, these practices of feeding foxes and interacting with them can be understood as rational and instrumental as they cultivate a social relation between these gardeners and the foxes which is enjoyed by the older allotment holders and probably helps them to deal with loneliness. These paradoxical relations between play and work are further exemplified by the care-work enacted in these interactions between humans and more-than-humans: it requires effort and determination to cook and bring food to the allotment site every day. The vignette on Pete also indicates that playful encounters can be tinged with sadness if the care-work invested in cultivating the relationship is not reciprocated by the wild animal. This brings to the fore that the allotment gardener's play is not necessarily also the fox's play, and it is these conflicting interpretations of play that I explore further in the next section on encounters of contestation.

First, though, I discuss an evocative example of an urban gardener cultivating gardens while at the same time cultivating relations with both her family and her plants. As mentioned earlier, guerrilla gardener Lisa cultivates several dispersed sites in South London. In our conversations, Lisa explained how some plants travel first from her parents' garden to her domestic garden and then out into the public guerrilla gardens she looks after:

*Lisa: Yes, and my parents are both elderly. While my mum is in great shape, my dad has Alzheimer's and has forgotten that he was a great gardener. But... in the moments that he can remember, it's a sort of hilarity that plants are travelling from Sussex to London! And in public spaces on the edge of the road too! (Both laugh) That's actually part of the reason I do the blog. Hopefully, some people might be converted to guerrilla gardening or changing the kinds of plants that they plant in their own gardens. But it is partly to do with entertaining my mother. (Both laugh)*

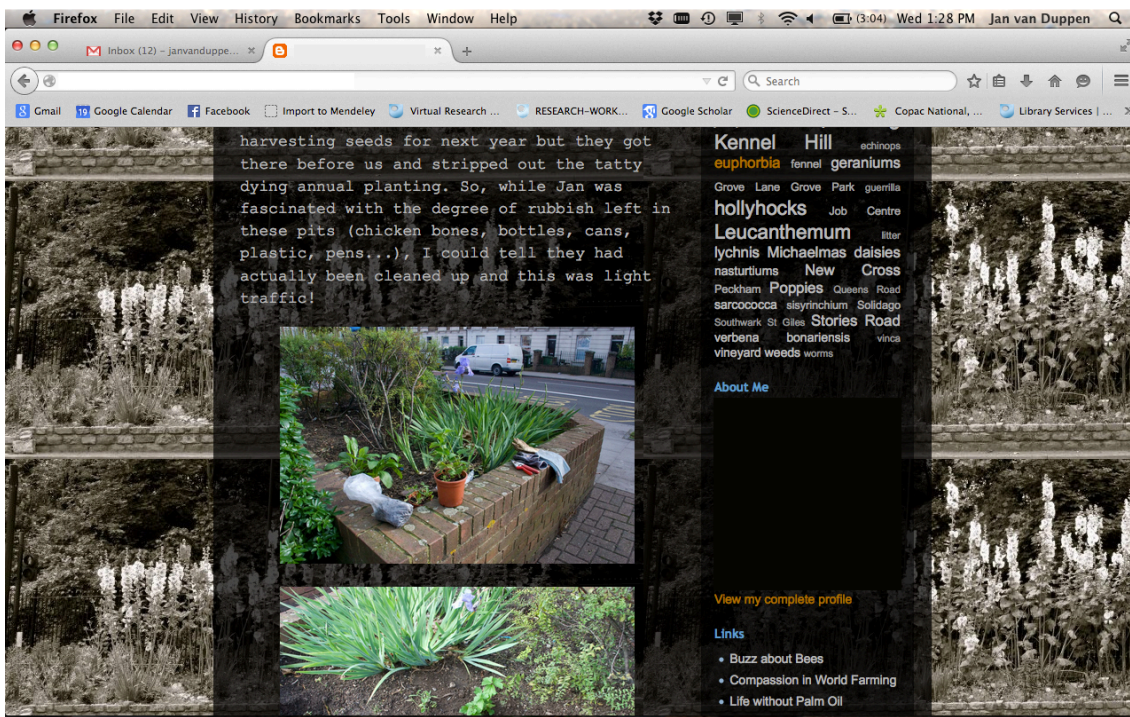
*Jan: Ah, to show what you've been doing?*

*Lisa: Yeah. And where her plants have gone. And...because I think probably about a third of the plants that are guerrilla are from this garden. Probably about a third, maybe more than that, are from my mum's garden, and a little bit from one of my neighbours a couple of houses down, who has an enormous garden.*

This again demonstrates how cultivating the garden offers a multitude of opportunities to simultaneously cultivate relationships with friends, family and non-humans. In this particular case, Lisa visits her parents in Sussex, helping them out in the garden and talking about new seeds, while also taking care of her father, who has Alzheimer's. Then she takes some plants to London in her car, letting them rest in her domestic garden until she has time to get out and do a 'dig'. These plants thus travel from the private into the public and from rural Sussex to urban London, their roots growing in neglected council planters next to a busy bus stop.

Lisa regularly returns to a number of different garden spots in the vicinity of her home and close to her work place. By watering and taking care of them she simultaneously cultivates her social relations with her parents. Moreover, these care-taking encounters travel from the physical garden site to the digital space of her blog (see Figure 22). She takes photos of the plants she has put in and writes a short text on the blog about the 'dig' to 'entertain' her mother. Her mother goes online and reads the blog entries, encountering the seedlings she has grown on the computer screen, which brings both Lisa and her parents a lot of joy.





**Figure 22 Screenshot of Lisa's guerrilla garden blog**

This account shows how taking care of the garden can mean cultivating relationships far beyond the physical realm of the public garden, transcending the boundary between humans and nonhumans. These multiple care-taking encounters with plants and her parents create a notion of care-work, as they require sustained looking after and involve quite some logistics and planning. But these care-taking encounters also produce a sense of play due to shared fun and enthusiasm for gardening and the way the travelling plants question conventions of public and private growing spaces.

## Summary

Care-taking encounters resemble Haraway's (2008) notion of 'becoming with'. In the dance of relating, urban gardeners take care of the garden and its more-than-human agencies, as well as themselves, extending these relations far beyond the physical site of the garden. Ahmed (2000) points out that it requires work to get closer to others and work with distance and differences, and this helps to understand the on-going playful interactions between foxes and allotment gardeners. Thus, in these encounters more-than-human playfulness is enacted simultaneously with the care-work and the sustained investment of energy necessary to look after plants, foxes, the self and one's parents. These more-than-human engagements and contradictory enactments

of playfulness and care-work mean that a rather different notion to the informal care found in market places by Watson (2009) emerges from these findings. This furthermore extends Bhatti et al.'s (2009) understanding of the potential of domestic gardens to cultivate social relations in public garden spaces.

## *6.4 Encounters of Contestation*

As I discussed in the section on chance encounters, gardeners continuously negotiate the density and diversity of urban space, and while this condition of throwntogetherness offers possibilities for surprise and play, it also involves risk. This section extends Ahmed's (2000) conception of encounters as involving conflict, and shows that interpretations of play can differ, meaning that encountering some else's play can be irritating, upsetting and conflictual. I extend the previous examples of taking care of foxes and guerrilla gardening to explore encounters of contestation.

As I have shown in the previous section, some allotment gardeners cultivate socialities with foxes on site. While for these older men these care-taking encounters are a playful dance of relating with more-than-humans, other allotment gardeners can get mildly irritated or even very upset with this particular kind of play with foxes. Many foxes co-inhabit this rather large allotment site with other species, and their inhabitation leaves traces such as trampled seedlings as they sleep inside the warm net tunnels, dig holes or look for mice under the canvas. Another trace that foxes leave is excrement, and many plot holders mention finding it on their beds. Robert comments that he occasionally finds himself cursing due to *'having to clear up a pile of droppings or cover up a newly-planted patch of something because it was dug over or sat on'*. Unsurprisingly, gardeners do not experience having to clear fox excrement from their patches as the most pleasant part of allotment gardening, nor do they much welcome finding small seedlings squashed because a fox has used a plot to sleep in.

Although most allotment gardeners are not disturbed by the presence of foxes on site, this certainly does not ring true for allotment gardeners Maria and Sue. The latter recalled an encounter with a fox that really scared her. It had looked at her with a slightly twisted mouth, and when she threw it a chocolate cookie, it took it from the ground and walked away. She

could hear the fox chewing it among the trees, and she felt uncomfortable because there was no one else around at the site. Maria is uncomfortable with the foxes for other reasons, being very upset about them trampling on her plants, digging up her potatoes and leaving their excrement on the raised beds. She goes on to say that she disapproves of people feeding the foxes because they become ‘*too tame*’ and ‘*lazy*’, and ‘*do not go after rats*’. She cries out: ‘*The most horrible thing in your life...Foxes!*’ To her, gardening with foxes is ‘*a battle...it’s a battle. They cost me over a hundred pounds a year, just to put stuff down to keep them away*’. The stuff she uses to keep the foxes away is not a chemical, she explains: ‘*I would not hurt the animals. I would not. I’m organic really*’. Maria thus contests the other allotment gardeners’ play with foxes, and rather than seeking contact with them she makes a lot of effort to keep them away from her plot – by using ‘stuff’ or strong netting. Maria’s disapproval of feeding the foxes is shared by other allotment holders. Both Darren and Jim, for example, are convinced that feeding them lessens their appetite for hunting rodents. In their view, foxes could help to keep the population of mice and rats down. In short, encounters with foxes and the traces they leave are not appreciated by all allotment holders. On the contrary, some gardeners are scared of them, while others make a lot of effort to prevent them getting close to their plants.

Like humans, more-than-humans can also play (Huizinga 1950, Haraway 2008), and it is this fox play that occasionally disturbs the growth of plants at the allotment—as illustrated by the following vignette:

*Luca, an old allotment holder with an Italian background showed me his plot one day in May. In between the dense bed of artichoke plants, some greasy plastic packaging from a fried chicken shop, some big pieces of paper and a plastic bag have been dropped randomly in between the crops. Moreover, several of the plants have been trampled on and left bowed, cracked and with broken leaves. Luca says that this is the result of young foxes playing, saying, ‘you can’t do nothing about the animals’. He is unhappy with the damage, but he accepts that he shares the space with the foxes. Luca sees the foxes regularly, and he points out that their nest is just next to the fence, outside the allotment site. He claims that there are two fox families living underground,*

*with many young foxes. Luca has cultivated his artichokes with much care, yet their growth has been disturbed by the young foxes playing on and around his plants.*

Although he is upset about the playing foxes damaging his plants, Luca expresses that it is beyond his control to do anything about it, and he is not too disturbed. However, this vignette does show that the play of one species is not necessarily that of the other.



**Figure 23 Fox walking off**

Thus, I have described encounters of contestation between the playfulness enacted between some allotment holders and foxes on the one hand and the gardening practices of other allotment holders on the other hand. Feeding foxes makes them return to the allotment site more frequently, and consequently they take naps on recently planted seedlings, leave excrement on growing salad and bury meat in the soil where tomato plants are growing. Furthermore, when foxes are being fed they are presumably less inclined to hunt for rodents at the allotment site, and some allotment gardeners regret the foxes' decreased appetite. Finally, I identify a conflict between animals' play and the 'play' space of the allotment gardener. The young foxes run amok in a field of artichoke plants, which intersects and conflicts with the space where the gardener grows vegetables for fun.

Encounters of contestation that make notions of play more ambiguous are also demonstrated by Lisa's guerrilla gardening practices. As I have shown in the previous section

on care-taking encounters, Lisa cultivates guerrilla gardens while at the same time cultivating her relations with her family. The notion of play enacted in these encounters was contested by another group of guerrilla gardeners when I joined her on a Sunday afternoon ‘dig’:

*During the afternoon, Lisa identifies several spots where she has previously put in plants. However, they have now disappeared, which makes her upset. She suspects that this has most probably been done by another ‘guerrilla’ group, run by Hans, which is mainly focused on planting sunflowers in the area. Via a Facebook group, Hans organises gatherings of people to look after several small pockets of space in the neighbourhood. I have to note here that this all happens without any official permission. Lisa comments that it is great that the sunflower group is so active in the local area, but she states that ‘Hans doesn’t know anything about gardening’. She suspects that they have just completely cleared the space in the raised bed, as if preparing a garden anew, and have thereby removed multiple plants that she had put in over a two year period, including some from her mother’s garden. She asks me to take pictures of the seedlings that we are putting in, as she plans to use these images on Facebook to ‘educate’ this sunflower group about the plants.*

This exemplifies how one person’s play can contest another person’s play. The sunflower guerrilla garden group understands removing ‘weeds’ as part of their play, although these are plants carefully cultivated by Lisa, some of which have travelled from her mother’s garden in Sussex. It is interesting, then, that this encounter of contestation moves from the physical site of the garden to the digital space of the social media platform Facebook.

Figure 24 and Figure 25 show one of the Facebook posts that Lisa uploaded to the ‘sunflower’ guerrilla garden Facebook group. Making use of some of the images I made as part of this research, Lisa tried to ‘educate’ other gardeners in order to prevent her plants being seen as weeds again and being taken out by this ‘competing’ guerrilla garden group.



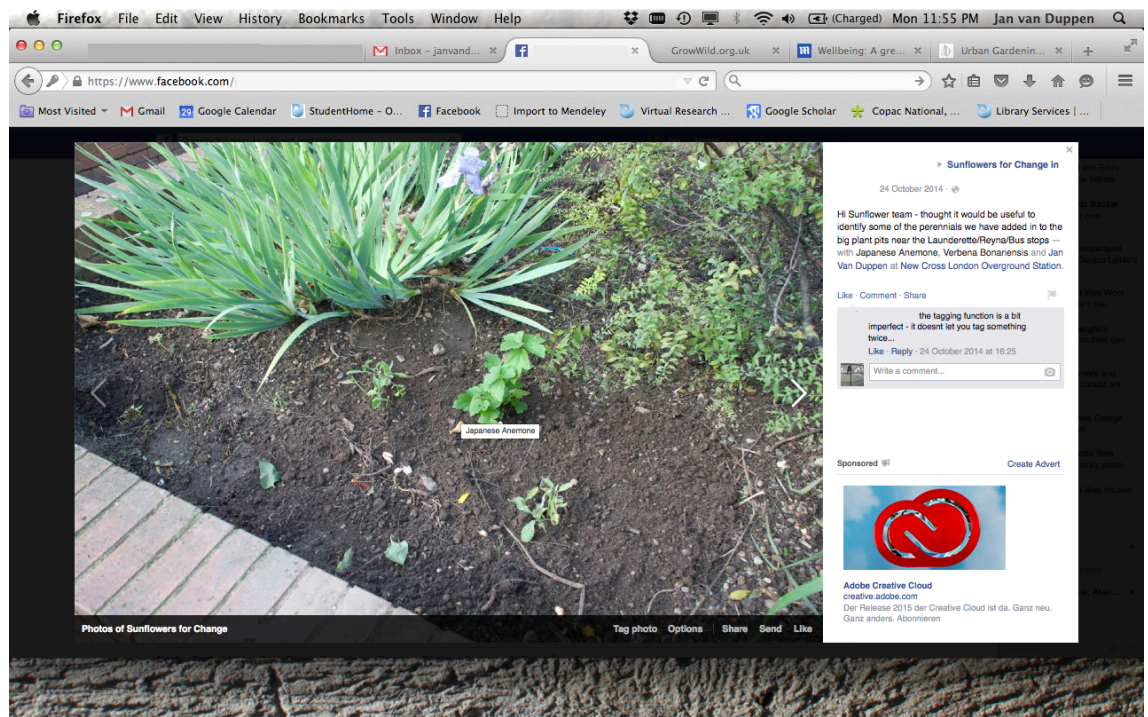


Figure 24 Screenshot Facebook-post Guerrilla Gardener Lisa

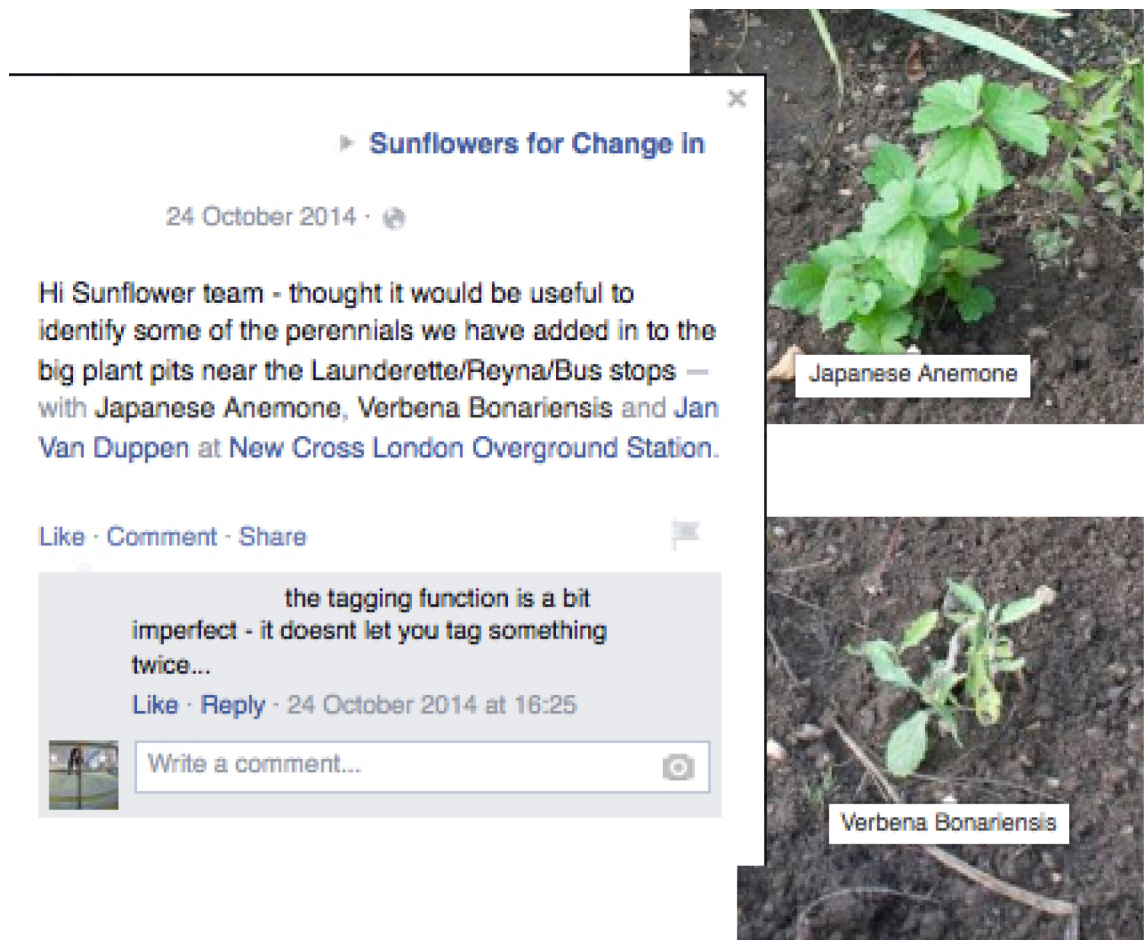


Figure 25 Detail Screenshot Facebook-post Guerrilla Gardener Lisa

These neglected council beds have thus become sites for encounters of contestation between two guerrilla gardening groups. This contestation over who can shape this 'playground' is then taken to the online space of a social media platform. Both of these groups intervene creatively in the urban fabric, and both try to enhance green spaces in the local area through their subversive practice. Yet Lisa qualifies the other sunflower group as lacking elementary knowledge about plants, saying that these rash sunflower gardeners disrupt her practice of tending the raised beds near a bus stop in South London. Lisa's efforts are undone by other gardeners, who are unaware of having done this, while she attempts to prevent this from happening again by trying to enhance the garden knowledge of the sunflower group by tagging plants in images in the Facebook group.

On a different note, Lisa has used this software to tag every individual plant on the images, thereby making the plants into 'persons' By uploading images onto the social media platform and adding text, she lifts them out of 'anonymity', trying to make the more-than-human plants visible to others. This speaks of an ethics of living together with more-than-humans, as signified by the species tagged in the image, plants amongst humans: Japanese anemone, *Verbena bonariensis* and Jan.

#### **6.4.1 Summary**

Encounters between humans and more-than-humans can thus involve contestation. By deploying Ahmed's (2000) understanding of encounters, I have illustrated the on-going processes of negotiation between humans and more-than-humans in public garden spaces. The ways in which gardeners respond to the throwntogetherness of urban spaces differ—using multiple strategies to deter foxes from inhabiting one's allotment plot on the one hand and transferring negotiations over guerrilla planting in a neglected council bed into the digital space on the other hand. Furthermore, these findings demonstrate that both humans and more-than-humans can have different interpretations of play and that these can conflict. This enhances cultural geographers' thinking on how socialities produce ambiguous ideas of play.

## *Conclusions*

This chapter has addressed the third research sub question: *How do encounters among and between humans and non-humans, taking place during gardening, cultivate socialities in the city?* It has thus taken Bhatti et al.'s (2009) notion that gardeners cultivate the garden at the same time as cultivating their own selves and their relationships with friends and family beyond the domestic space of the private garden and into the urban space of public gardens. This analysis has introduced four forms of encounter which take place in urban gardens: festive, chance, care-taking and contestation. In examining these types of encounter, I have developed cultural geography's thinking on the potential of urban gardens to cultivate socialities amongst strangers, passers-by, volunteers, neighbours and, importantly, more-than-humans. The ethnographic material presented here gives insights into how social relations are made and unmade across species that are 'thrown together' in urban spaces, and enhances this thesis' understanding of the paradoxical spaces of play and work by showing how perceptions of play can differ and conflict, as well as evoking playful dispositions and notions of care-work.

First of all, the findings on festive encounters demonstrate that urban gardens can be transformed into spaces of intense socialities, with distinct temporalities and transformed spatialities. This material alludes most clearly to Huizinga's (1950) conception of play and Simmel's (1949) work on sociability, and thus enhances cultural geography's understanding of gardening encounters as sites of play. However, these social gatherings also provide insights into moments of conflict between participants. As the social atmosphere is intensified, some people lose their patience, as with the pumpkin carving. Moreover, the particular conditions of the guerrilla gardening digs introduce more ambiguous notions of play and sociability, as for some these social gatherings serve professional and commercial interests—which exemplifies Rojek's (2010) account of play as serving the enhancement of personal and work capacities.

This notion of encounters as sites of play has been developed further in the section on chance encounters, which examines practices of 'bumping into', 'passing by' and 'eavesdropping'. I have described many instances of chance encounters which evoke this idea of social interactions as sites of play. This is a sociability less concerned with possible outcomes

than with actually finding joy in the uncertainties that are wrapped up in these chance encounters between people, running contrary to notions of work that are focused on controlling outcomes. These chance encounters are seen as part of negotiating the throwntogetherness of urban spaces, and they offer the possibility of being surprised but also involve the risk of conflict (Ahmed 2000, Massey 2005). Social relations can become strained, and I have shown how normative perceptions of gender roles, sexualities and racism are re-constituted in the chance encounters which take place as people pass by gardens or bump into fellow gardeners. Most importantly, I have introduced a particular understanding of chance encounters as involving a playful mode of engaging with gardens and their socialities, which constitutes an openness towards their contingencies (Pisac 2013) and allows for moments of ‘creativity’ (Scheel 2013) in relating to others. Rather than trying to resist or avoid the unexpected, gardeners open up and engage with unknown others. Garden spaces thus offer the possibility of being surprised, something which is actively nurtured by most urban gardeners.

Further enactments of play and work have been traced in the discussion on care-taking encounters, where I demonstrate a playful ‘becoming with’ (Haraway 2008) the more-than-human agencies in urban gardens—such as the socialities cultivated between foxes and retired allotment gardeners. At the same, however, these social relations require care-work, and these gestures of reaching out are sometimes tainted with sadness, as they are not always reciprocated. Care-taking encounters also involve transcending the cultivation of social relations across private, public and digital sites—as demonstrated by the practice of taking care of guerrilla patches and documenting this online.

Throughout the chapter, notions of play as produced in encounters become increasingly contested and challenged, from which a more ambiguous idea of play emerges. This is most clearly evoked in the accounts of encounters of contestation, in which conflicting perceptions of play are revealed—I think here of the competing guerrilla gardening groups and the irritation caused by foxes’ co-cultivation of the allotment gardens. As well as in this last section, these contradictory perceptions of play are also exemplified in festive, chance and care-taking

encounters. This insight enhances this thesis' understanding of the paradoxical spaces of play and work as enacted in urban gardens.





## Chapter 7. Conclusions

This thesis has addressed the question: *How do different urban gardening practices enact the relations between play and work?* Based on a comparative ethnographic study of allotment, community and guerrilla gardening, this research understands notions of play and work as being constantly in the making, contested and contingent, rather than being pre-figured, distinct, bounded social categories. This chapter discusses how these insights into the ambiguous relations between play and work intervene in contemporary debates on gardening in the discipline of cultural geography. It identifies three ways in which this thesis enhances cultural geography's understanding of urban gardening: gardens as paradoxical spaces of play and work, the complexities of more-than-human playfulness and the socialities of gardening in the city.

This thesis envisions urban gardens as embodied, practiced landscapes, spaces productive of contradictory and ambiguous cultural meanings. As I discussed in Chapter 2, I contribute to cultural geographers' understanding of gardening by exploring how embodied practices enact the complex relations between play and work. Rather than thinking in terms of opposite, clear-cut categories, this research has shown that the boundaries between play and work get blurred in three particular ways. First, gardening practices enact notions of both play and work. Moreover, these concepts get entangled in multiple ways, play needing to be sustained by work and work producing notions of play. Second, objects constantly travel across spaces of work and play. Contrary to conceptions of boundaries as being closed and fixed, this thesis understands them as permeable and continuously in the process of being made and unmade. Third, gardeners have different perceptions of play, and these can conflict with each other, producing a more ambiguous understanding of play. In the following, these three ways in which this thesis understands the paradoxical spaces (Rose 1993) of play and work are discussed.

First of all, I have analysed how gardening practices enact notions of both play and work, and how these distinct categories break down into entangled contingencies. Chapter 4 addressed the research subquestion 'why do people garden?' by discussing how participants

ascribe to gardening a mix of qualities which allude to both play and work. First, gardening is said to be enjoyed for its visceral experience, which confirms both Huizinga's idea of play as being fun, embodied and utterly absorbing the 'player' and Caillois' conception of a particular mode of play – *paidia*, or unstructured, ephemeral tactile exploration. Furthermore, the particular corpo-realities and materialities of the three gardening practices were introduced in the photo-essay 'getting your hand dirty', a series of images depicting bodies performing garden gestures which attempt to capture the tactility involved in these practices. Chapter 4 also demonstrated that participants value the sense of achievement created by their gardening practices, and gardeners' emphasis on achieving things challenges the idea that play is by definition uninterested in its own outcomes. However, it must also be noted that gardeners sometimes set up a distinction between their paid work and their enjoyment of gardening, with the former being talked about as unsatisfying because its results feel so intangible while the latter is enjoyed for its visceral experience and its material, tangible outcomes. Hence, this research's findings introduce an ambiguity into Caillois and Huizinga's emphasis on the unproductiveness of play and its non-instrumental qualities. Chapter 4 also unpacked gardening as an activity undertaken voluntarily and in people's free time, which are qualities associated with notions of play. However, I identified three ways in which this notion of volunteering becomes more complicated and less 'free', thereby alluding to notions of work. First, gardeners have to work hard to 'keep on top' of their garden spaces. Second, participants' have to make a lot of effort to make time to garden, negotiating the various demands made on their time in their daily lives. Third, gardeners feel a social obligation to the garden and to fellow gardeners to come and garden. Furthermore, the institutional context has different effects on allotment, community and guerrilla gardeners. Thus, gardening produces multiple and ambiguous meanings of play and work.

Revealing the entanglements between play and work as enacted in urban gardens, this thesis develops these paradoxical relations further and shows how these notions are so tightly knit together it is not entirely clear where play ends and work begins, and the other way around. This thesis makes visible how these categories are contingent and related. The following

entanglements between play and work have been identified, starting with moments of play which depend on practices of work. For instance, gardens and their greenery need to be cultivated; it requires hard work to keep on top of the garden, as I discussed in Chapter 4. To keep flourishing, plants need the care of gardeners over a sustained period, and this hard physical garden work becomes entangled with the enjoyment derived from experiencing the aesthetics of the garden and the consumption of garden produce. For allotment gardeners, there is also an institutional obligation to cultivate their plot, because if they fail to do so they lose the right to be a tenant. Thus, in order to gain and sustain access to their allotment—their space of play, they need to put in the work of cultivation. Another example of moments of play depending on work practices is the energies gardeners invest in ‘making time to garden’. Participants work hard on negotiating their everyday roles as employees, parents, partners and care-takers to create a weekly time slot for gardening. This creating and bending of time to garden is entangled with the sense of flow gardeners experience whilst gardening. Gardeners’ repetitive body movements and intimate patterns of relating with more-than-human agencies create an affective intensity of enchantment and ‘*zoning-out*’ (Lisa, guerrilla gardener). This study argues that this moment of play, this flow experience, is entangled with the work invested in making time to garden. The moment of play is knit tightly together with the work of negotiating various demands on gardeners’ time from both the domestic and labour spheres.

Moreover, this flow experience as a form of play is also entangled with the stress caused by the domestic and paid work spheres. Some participants describe the therapeutic effects of their gardening practices, talking about this specific flow-experience in terms of helping them to process emotions and develop ideas related to their jobs or social lives. In such instances, gardening enacts moments of play, whilst also dwelling on the residues of paid work. Furthermore, this release of stress feeds back into the paid work sphere and other realms of people’s lives. Additionally, I have shown in Chapter 4 how in the process of gardening some gardeners obtain forms of knowledge which contribute to their capacities for paid work. Again, gardening practices enact a link between notions of play and work. Similarly, some gardeners meet people whilst gardening for fun, interacting playfully, while at the same time extending

their social networks, which directly benefits them in their paid work activities. As I noted earlier, it is quite difficult to pin down precisely where play stops and work begins in these accounts of gardening practices.

Gardening practices thus enact ideas of both play and work, and these notions get entangled in all sorts of ways. A second way in which this thesis specifies the paradoxical relations between play and work is its demonstration that objects travel constantly across spaces of play and work. This insight derives from having addressed the second research subquestion: *How do the embodied practices of gardening create distinct time-spaces for play and/or work?* Contrary to conceptions of the ‘playground’ as being set apart from everyday life, and of the garden as being a space of peaceful green escape, this thesis understands their spatial and temporal boundaries as permeable and continuously in the process of being made and unmade. By making visible the multiple processes of boundary making which take place during gardening and showing the relations between inside and outside, this thesis questions ideas of the garden and the playground as clearly marked, fixed, enclosed time-spaces. Chapter 5 discussed three different modes of making and unmaking garden boundaries: affective, imaginative and material. First, affective boundary making practices refer to the flow-experience produced when participants garden. Gardeners see this zoning-out created by doing repetitive physical garden work as enjoyable and therapeutic, which confirms Huizinga’s understanding of play as embodied and absorbing. Moreover, this process of zoning out can be thought of as a corporeal and affective manifestation of the boundaries of the playground. Second, imaginative boundary making practices are performed by participants as a discourse of the spatial imagery of the garden as a distinct, other world of greenery, peacefulness, and retreat. Through their talk and embodied practices, participants work hard to bring the garden into being as set apart from the loudness and business of the city. Yet, this spatial imagination of a peaceful secluded space is often disrupted by sounds and stories travelling into these spaces.

Third, the influence of the idea of the playground as set apart from everyday life, and of the garden as an enclosed space of escape, is confirmed by gardeners’ practices of materialising



the boundaries around their garden spaces. This study has found that especially allotment and community gardeners enact time-spaces that are very specific in how they can be accessed. The allotment site is only accessible to the public on Sunday mornings, while the community garden is tucked away and is only accessible through a small door. In contrast, guerrilla gardeners occupy spaces that are marginal, yet very accessible to the urban public, and they therefore develop multiple ways of materialising boundaries to make urban gardens. In terms of visibility, the practices of planting and maintaining a hedgerow and greenery along fences make both the allotment site and the community garden less visible from the outside. In doing this, urban gardeners make attempts to constitute an enclosed space that seems to resemble the bounded notion of the ‘playground’ as described by Huizinga and Caillois.

Nevertheless, garden boundaries are continuously breached, as the analysis of how boundaries are materialised in Chapter 5 showed. First of all, photo-essay B, ‘de-constructing boundaries’, visually articulated the ways in which gardeners negotiate garden spaces in relation to their direct surroundings. This systematic enquiry into garden borders made clear that objects travel continuously across spaces of ‘play’ and ‘work’. For instance, allotment holders re-use materials such as old doors, bath-tubs, fencing and wooden pallets taken from work places like building sites and skips. But commuters also discard litter in raised garden beds, thereby breaching the boundaries of the guerrilla gardening patches. Chapter 5 further developed this thinking on how the boundaries between the ‘inside’ of the garden and the ‘outside’ of the city are continuously breached by smells, noises, sights, water infrastructure, vandalism and theft, as with the complex, invisible (dis)connections of the allotment site to the sewage system and water networks, while the community garden provides the example of the smells and noise coming from the neighbouring food market and open air music festivals.

The analysis has demonstrated that gardeners keep themselves busy negotiating these multiple ways of breaching the boundaries of the garden space. Gardeners invest a lot of time and energy in rendering the garden invisible to the outside world, as well as negotiating its very existence under often intense pressure. As community garden coordinator Aoife said, ‘*we have to fight our corner here*’. I understand these processes of negotiation not as producing an

isolated, bounded garden space, but as exemplifying how places are made through their social relations with the 'outside' world (Massey 1991). Furthermore, this demonstrates that, unlike Huizinga's conception of the playground, the garden's material boundaries are not pre-given, but are worked upon. This thesis thus demonstrates that garden boundaries are permeable and continuously in the making, and thereby also challenges conceptions of the garden as a pure, safe and peaceful place.

The third way this thesis enhances cultural geography's thinking on the paradoxical space of play enacted in the garden is the observation that perceptions of play differ amongst gardeners, and cause encounters involving conflict. The third and final subquestion was: *How do encounters among and between humans and non-humans, taking place during gardening, cultivate socialities in the city?* Addressing this has provided insights into how gardeners interpret play differently and shown how these interpretations consequently overlap as well as contesting each other. This was exemplified by the analysis in Chapter 6 of encounters between humans and more-than-humans typified as festive, chance, care-taking and contestation encounters. Festive encounters encompassed the intense socialities, distinct temporalities and transformed spatialities of the pumpkin carving workshop at the community garden and the harvest barbecue at the allotment garden. Both these social gatherings mark a specific moment in the year, celebrating Halloween and harvest respectively, both in the autumn. The multiple encounters which take place produce festive atmospheres of laughter and the sharing of stories and food. Following on, Chapter 6 also introduced the concept of chance encounters in order to capture social interactions best characterised as unexpected, fun, fleeting and spontaneous. This brought to the fore practices of bumping into fellow gardeners, eavesdropping, meeting 'different' people and fleeting encounters on the street. I have identified here a certain anticipation of being surprised, a pre-constructed openness to encountering something new whilst gardening, which alludes to conceptions of play. The chapter furthermore showed how cultivating the garden is intimately linked to the cultivation of social relations and the self, discussing care-taking encounters with foxes at the allotment site and with parents at the guerrilla garden, alluding to a more-than-human playfulness.

However, Chapter 6 also argued that these care-taking encounters begin to expose different interpretations of play. The analysis revealed disquiet and irritation amongst some allotment gardeners about the foxes being fed and medicated by other allotment gardeners. A guerrilla gardener also contested the practices of other guerrilla gardeners, as they ruined her 'play' by (unknowingly) pulling out plants that she had cared for. These accounts of gardeners playing and encountering play urge an understanding of play as ambiguous, rather than pure in any way.

This research extends Longhurst's (2006) work on domestic gardens as paradoxical spaces (Rose 1993) in which leisure and work merge, and Bhatti and Church's (2001, p. 380) characterisation of gardens as places 'where individuals can develop complex, sensual and personalised readings of nature'. It also builds upon Crouch and Ward's (1997) understanding of allotments as 'peopled landscapes' and Crouch's understanding of play and work as being 'mixed together in life rather than having essentially different isolated character and affect' (Crouch 2010c, p. 77). This thesis has developed DeSilvey's insights into how, at allotments, the 'static dichotomies...of labour and leisure break down into entangled contingencies' (DeSilvey 2003, p. 21). Furthermore, it expands on Schoneboom's observations that 'allotments are neither a form of pure rebellion nor a harmonious antidote to work-related stress but a many layered and contradictory discourse on wage labour and its alternatives' (2013, p. 148). To conclude, gardening practices enact multiple and ambiguous meanings of play and work, and the relations between these categories can best be understood as paradoxical. This thesis thus argues for urban gardens to be understood as unstable, permeable, ambiguous spaces of both play and work. This analysis contributes to cultural geographers' understanding of urban gardens by showing how gardening practices enact notions of both play and work which get entangled in all sorts of ways. Secondly, it demonstrates that objects travel continuously across spaces of play and work, as permeable garden boundaries are made and unmade constantly. Third, gardeners have varying perceptions of play, which overlap but also contest each other.

By discussing in detail these various entanglements between play and work, I contribute to the debate on how urban gardening practices feed into, complement and offer an alternative

to the figures of the ‘playful worker’ and ‘working one’s play-time’ (as discussed in Chapter 2). This thesis makes it visible that gardening practices are part of capitalist post-Fordist society, which appropriates qualities of play such as fun, flexibility and creativity as motors of economic growth and exploitation. For instance, participants’ gardening practices produce knowledge and extend social networks, which enhances their capacities for their paid occupations. Furthermore, the visceral joy, sense of achievement and flow-experience participants derive from gardening help them to process stresses related to paid work and regain energy for their jobs. However, my analysis also depicts the richness and complexity of gardeners’ experiences. I have shown multiple moments of play enacted in the garden which cannot be easily translated into contributions to personal capacity to succeed economically in post-Fordist capitalist society. I think here of the festive and chance encounters which take place in the garden, but also the hard work of keeping on top of the weeds and the joys derived from seeing the ‘*fruits of labour*’. Moreover, I point out the various ways in which urban gardeners take care of humans and more-than-humans, thereby sustaining social relations across species, which defies ideas of pure economic calculation and rational forms of leisure. This thesis has thus shown that although these practices take place within the neoliberal urban context of London, gardening offers the potential for ambiguous forms of play. Through multiple encounters within the lively garden, gardeners have fun, get absorbed in their embodied practices, make and unmake social relations and are less concerned with outcomes or results. Play as enacted in urban gardens encompasses an intensity of affect and sociality which is less prefigured by a desire to control outcomes and is more open to chance and enjoyment of the doing itself.

This thesis has shown that the study of gardens offers a multitude of opportunities for research in cultural geography beyond discussing people’s relationships with nature. This ethnographic study of social-material entanglements in gardens produces rich insights into how the self and society are constituted.

Moreover, this thesis enhances debates in urban studies and cultural geography on urban encounters (Watson 2006, Stevens 2007a, Wilson 2016) as it engages with the complexities of living with difference in cities through the lens of gardening. The

throwntogetherness of the urban space opens up the garden and gardeners to other humans and more-than-humans; it presents the on-going challenge of negotiating differences. Throughout the previous chapters, multiple encounters between humans and more-than-humans were evoked and examined, from which a multi-faceted image emerges of gardens' spatialities, temporalities and socialities embedded in the urban. Gardeners' embodied practices help to bring gardens into being through the continuous making and unmaking of social relations across species.

This thesis has gone beyond more conventional text-based ethnographic research and made use of the creative practice of photography to engage with the rich textures and visualities of garden places. This has been an attempt to evoke the everyday creativities of gardeners by deploying a similarly creative practice of making images as part of the fieldwork. As important as making the image is the process of going through large numbers of files on the computer afterwards, sorting, tagging and selecting them to make a photo-series that might convey a hint of the playful material practices, as well as the hard physical work, engaged in by urban gardeners. The thesis demonstrates that for ethnographic research that tries to capture and analyse creative practices, the camera offers a productive tool to produce visual modes of knowing for cultural geography.

In addition to visual ways of knowing, this thesis has also made some forays into the digital spaces of gardening, and here lies a promising field for future research. The ethnographic material collected both offline and online suggests that especially for guerrilla gardening, but also for community gardening, online practices such as visiting and writing blogs or gathering on social media platforms to exchange garden stories and plan future digs have become increasingly important. This also demonstrates that these are 'urban' practices, as they are shaped by contemporary urban culture and the increasing enmeshing of technologies such as the smartphone with our everyday lives. It would be interesting to explore further how more-than-humans are represented on social media platforms, and what the limitations and potential of digital gardening practices are. When tagging plants on an image on Facebook, guerrilla gardener Lisa encountered the limitations of this digital space, as it did not allow the same name



to be used multiple times in a single image. Thus, she could not tag species, which testifies how the particular structure of the software produces individualised, personally named subjects. Furthermore, digital gardening practices raise questions about how the liveliness and materialities of the physical garden site are translated to digital green spaces.

By showing the kinds of work involved in maintaining public garden spaces, this study also intervenes in current public debates on urban green spaces by showing the multiple meanings of allotment, community and guerrilla gardens for people living in cities. This ethnographic account of everyday gardening practices shows the hard work and commitment that is invested in these green spaces, as well as the play of meeting others there. The vignettes on urban gardening in this research provide an important counter image to proposals for new green urban spaces such as the Garden Bridge in London—a bridge across the Thames that would provide a green corridor for pedestrians. Without a doubt, this will provide tourists with an attractive selfie opportunity, but such grand projects for spectacular green space render more mundane green spaces out of focus. Moreover, these future garden bridge tourists will have a different relation to the images they take, as they will not have worked on cultivating the garden. This thesis has shown that making images of garden spaces is often wrapped up with the physical work invested in cultivating them and the notion of play derived from doing so. Thus, this thesis' analysis of urban gardens shows the value for city dwellers of everyday green spaces situated within their neighbourhoods. In times when the UK government continues to impose austerity policies on local councils, forcing them to cut their budgets for the maintenance of green spaces, it seems all the more urgent to shed light on the on-going embodied efforts of gardeners to cultivate accessible green space for local communities.

Regarding debates on inhabiting the city and the role of public space in urban everyday life, this thesis demonstrates that gardening breathes life into the urban through on-going encounters between people, plants and animals. However, gardening also involves the unpredictability of 'cutting into the life flows' (Ginn 2017, p. 118) of plants, meaning that there is a risk involved, and it is precisely this certain uncertainty that makes it enjoyable. Transferring Ginn's (2017) observations from domestic gardens to public gardens, this thesis'

account of different types of encounters reveals a similar joy derived from unexpected meetings between humans and more-than-humans.

As these urban gardens are situated in the city, the range of others is multiple and diverse, and it is openness towards the contingencies of inhabiting these urban spaces that alludes to a playful mode of engaging with the world: getting to know the garden through multiple senses and undertaking unstructured and tactile explorations into the more-than-human geographies of the place. Snacking on raspberries straight from the plant, feeding a fox, eavesdropping on a conversation and bumping into a stranger are all manifestations of this playful mode of becoming with humans and more-than-humans. Rather than trying to resist or avoid the unexpected, gardeners open up and engage with unknown others. Urban gardening thus offers the possibility of being surprised, which is actively nurtured by most urban gardeners.



## Appendices

## *Appendix A. Data Collection Overview*

### **1. Allotment Garden Case Study**

#### **Participant Observations:**

Total amount of observation days: 24

2014-10-07 Allotment Gardening, Tuesday afternoon

2014-10-21 Allotment Gardening, Tuesday afternoon

2014-09-29 Allotment Gardening, Monday afternoon

2014-09-27 Allotment Gardening, Saturday afternoon

2014-09-21 Allotment Gardening, Sunday afternoon

2014-09-14 Allotment Gardening, Sunday afternoon

2014-09-07 Allotment Gardening, Sunday afternoon

2014-08-04 Allotment Gardening, Monday morning

2014-08-03 Allotment Gardening, Sunday afternoon

2014-07-13 Allotment Gardening, Sunday afternoon

2014-06-29 Allotment Gardening, Sunday, go-along

2014-06-23 Allotment Gardening, Monday morning

2014-06-15 Allotment Gardening, Sunday afternoon & evening

2014-06-11 Allotment Gardening, Tuesday afternoon & evening

2014-05-10 Allotment Gardening, Saturday morning & afternoon

2014-03-16 Allotment Gardening, Sunday morning & afternoon

2014-02-16 Allotment Gardening, Sunday morning & afternoon

2014-02-08 Allotment gardening, Saturday morning & afternoon

2014-01-25 Allotment gardening, Saturday afternoon

2014-01-19 Allotment Gardening, Sunday morning & afternoon

2014-01-11 Allotment Gardening, Sunday morning & afternoon

2014-01-10 Allotment gardening, Friday morning

2014-01-05 Allotment Gardening, Sunday morning & afternoon

2013-08-18 Allotment Gardening, Sunday morning & afternoon



**Go-Alongs:**

Total amount of go-alongs: 15 of which 12 tape recorded and transcribed, other 3 notes.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Sex</i>
2014-10-22	Paul	M
2014-09-29	Julia	F
2014-09-27	Jim	M
2014-09-14	Stephanie	F
2014-09-07	Martha	F
2014-08-04	Allan (2 <sup>nd</sup> go-along)	M
2014-08-03	Quino	M
2014-08-03	Maria	F
2014-07-13	Jasna	F
2014-06-29	Usain	M
2014-06-23	Allan	M
2014-06-11	Pablo	M
2014-02-16	Robert	M
2014-05-10	Pete	M
2014-01-19	Sue	F

**Semi-structured interviews:**

The semi-structured interview with Paul was tape-recorded and transcribed.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Sex</i>
2014-01-10	Paul, Allotment Site Secretary	M

## **2. Community Garden Case Study**

### **Participant Observations:**

I've joined 22 volunteering Saturday afternoons at the Eastern Curve Community Garden. In addition I have visited the garden 11 times, during which I talked with other visitors, and joined in events.

2014-11-08 Community Gardening

2014-10-30 Community Gardening

2014-10-26 Community Gardening, Sunday afternoon

2014-10-23 Community Gardening, Thursday afternoon

2014-10-18 Community Gardening, Saturday afternoon, evening

2014-10-17 Community Gardening, Friday afternoon, evening

2014-10-04 Community Gardening, Saturday afternoon

2014-09-28 Community Gardening, Sunday afternoon, evening

2014-09-20 Community Gardening, Saturday afternoon,

2014-09-13 Community Gardening, Saturday afternoon

2014-09-06 Community Gardening, Saturday afternoon

2014-08-30 Community Gardening, Saturday afternoon

2014-08-09 Community Gardening, Saturday afternoon

2014-08-02 Community Gardening, Saturday afternoon

2014-07-12 Community Gardening, Saturday afternoon

2014-07-05 Community Gardening, Saturday afternoon

2014-07-03 Community Gardening, Thursday evening

2014-07-01 Community Gardening, Tuesday morning

2014-06-28 Community Gardening, Saturday afternoon

2014-06-21 Community Gardening, Saturday afternoon & evening

2014-06-14 Community Gardening, Saturday morning & afternoon

2014-06-09 Community Gardening, Saturday afternoon

2014-06-07 Community Gardening, Saturday afternoon

2014-05-24 Community Gardening, Saturday afternoon & evening

2014-05-17 Community Gardening, Saturday afternoon & evening

2014-04-12 Community Gardening, Saturday afternoon

2014-03-22 Community Gardening, Saturday afternoon

2014-03-08 Community Gardening, Saturday afternoon

2014-02-25 Community Gardening, Tuesday

2014-02-22 Community Gardening, Saturday morning & afternoon

2014-01-29 Community Gardening, Wednesday afternoon

2014-01-17 Community Gardening, Friday afternoon

2013-12-07 Community Gardening, Saturday afternoon

2013-11-17 Community Gardening, Sunday afternoon

2013-08-20 Community Gardening, Tuesday evening

2013-07-20 Community Gardening, Saturday afternoon

**Go-Alongs:**

Total amount of go-alongs: 13 of which 13 tape recorded and transcribed.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Sex</i>
2014-11-07	John	M
2014-10-30	Kathy	F
2014-10-17	Sofia & Ethel	F, F
2014-09-20	Arthur	M
2014-09-20	James	M
2014-09-08	Neil	M
2014-08-09	Megha	F
2014-08-09	Adrian	M
2014-08-02	Lilly	F
2014-06-21	Bagpuss	F
2014-06-14	Zeynep	F
2014-06-14	Samantha	F
2014-06-09	Maurizio	M

**Semi-structured interviews:**

The semi-structured interview with Aoife was tape-recorded and transcribed, the meeting with Liza and Johanna was written up in notes.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Sex</i>
2015-08-06	Johanna Gibbons from J&L Gibbons landscape architecture, and Liza Fior from muf architecture/art. The heads of the design team of the Dalston Eastern Curve Garden.	F, F
2014-10-30	Aoife, Dalston Eastern Curve Garden coordinator	F

### 3. Guerrilla Garden Case Study

#### Participant Observation:

Total amount of observation days: 13

2014-10-19 Guerrilla Gardening, Sunday afternoon, dig with Lisa

2014-10-05 Guerrilla Gardening, Sunday Afternoon, Elefest, Richard

2014-09-09 Guerrilla Gardening, Tuesday evening, dig with Lisa

2014-09-02 Guerrilla Gardening, go-along with Barry and Angela

2014-07-30 Guerrilla Gardening, Wednesday, Dig & go-along Lisa

2014-07-14 Guerrilla Gardening, Go-Along Monica

2014-07-06 Guerrilla Gardening, Permaculture Festival

2014-07-03 Guerrilla Gardening, Thursday, Walk along the canal to discover sites

2014-05-04 Guerrilla Gardening, Sunday afternoon, Stamford Hill: Break New Ground, Monica

2014-05-03 Guerrilla Gardening, Saturday afternoon, New Ham, Caravan Serai, Jackie

2014-05-01 Guerrilla Gardening, Thursday evening, The Elephant & Castle Dig, Richard

2013-10-05 Guerrilla Gardening, Sunday, Elefest Festival Dig with Richard Reynolds

2013-09-16 Guerrilla Gardening, Monday, go-Along with Karin Hornsey Park Rd

#### Go-alongs:

Total amount of go-alongs: 7 of which 5 tape recorded and transcribed, other 2 field notes.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Sex</i>
2014-11-10	Jonas	M
2014-09-02	Barry & Angela	M & F
2014-07-30	Lisa	F
2014-07-14	Monica	F
2014-05-03	Jackie	F
2013-10-05	Richard	M
2013-09-16	Karin	F

**Semi-structured interviews:**

These 3 semi-structured interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Sex</i>
2014-10-05	Richard Reynolds, organiser of Elephant & Castle guerrilla gardening group	M
2014-07-30	Lisa, organiser of guerrilla gardening group in South London	F
2013-09-03	Mary McHugh, Co-organiser of Chelsea Garden Fringe Festival	F



## *Appendix B. Go-along Topic List*

### **Embodied Practices**

What's your garden routine? When do you come to the allotment? Does it differ over the seasons?

Do you enjoy the gardening? What bits of it? Why?

Describe your plot, what's there, since when, what did you make?

With what kind of tools do you work?

How did you learn to garden? How did you learn how to handle the tools?

What do you consider the boundaries of your plot, and of the allotment site as a whole?

Who made your shed? What is it made of? What do you store in there?

What does the gardening do to your body? Did you have any injuries or illness due to the gardening? Or does it help you to regain energies?

How do you travel to the allotment? How long does it take you? And why?

What kind of material are re-used? Improvisation?

The view on the city? The open space? What does it do to you?

### **Sociality**

Do you know the other gardeners? What kind of things do you talk about? Do you see the gardeners outside the allotment site?

Do you garden alone? Or with your partner/ friends?

How does the community function? When are there meetings?

What kind of conflicts do arise between plot holders? How are these normally approached?

### **Values**

Why do you garden? What makes it meaningful? When and why did you start?

What do you do with your harvest? Do you cook and eat it? Do you preserve it?

Do you share your harvest? With whom? How?

Are you self-sufficient? And what does that mean to you?

### **Personal Background**

-How does the gardening 'relate' to their 'work'?

## *Appendix C. Consent Form*

### *Play and Work: Gardening on the Cracks of the City*

#### **Participant Information Sheet**

##### **About the Project**

*'Play and Work: Gardening on the Cracks of the City'* is a postgraduate research project undertaken by Jan van Duppen. He is a geography PhD student based at the Open University. The research is about urban gardening practices in London. The project is funded by the Faculty of Social Sciences, the Open University, Milton Keynes, UK.

##### **Aims of this research**

This study aims to get a better understanding of urban gardening practices in London. It will discuss notions of play and work in relation to the production of urban spaces. The research focuses on the multiple meanings that gardeners in London attach to urban gardening; and how gardening transforms the relation with their urban surroundings.

##### **Benefits of this research**

- This research will provide the three urban gardening groups with evidence of the social and cultural value of their practice.
- The participants involved will benefit as this project will increase understanding of their practices within society, and it will reveal the meaning of the green spaces for both gardeners and visitors. This will provide them with arguments for discussing local urban planning policies. There is a need to show the importance of green spaces like allotments and community gardens for the wellbeing of our contemporary cities.
- This project's focus on play and work will introduce a new perspective in urban planning and gardening debates.

##### **What your participation will involve**

- Your contribution to the research may involve participating in formal and informal interviews with the researcher.
- The researcher will garden with you and be present at the garden space, and as such you might be observed and photographed.

### **How your data will be used**

- All data will have personal and other identifying details removed before it is used in this research, this does not include images made during the research. On the consent form you can identify whether you are happy to be photographed for this research, or if you prefer to participate without being visible in images.
- All raw data (transcripts, notebooks, photographs, audio material) will remain securely with the research team and will be accessible only by them for the duration of the research.
- A selection of quotes and images taken from the observations and interviews will be used in public documents and presentations, including the PhD-thesis, journal articles, conferences, books, text and audio-visual media, podcasts and/or website presentations.
- All participants have the right to have all raw data (transcripts, notebooks, photographs, audio material) returned to them should they decide to end their involvement, which they may do within 3 months after the collection of the data has been completed.
- All participants may obtain a report upon request summarising the main findings of the research once it has been completed.

### **Contacts & Further information**

If you need further information about this research, please contact Jan van Duppen:

**E-mail:** jan.van.duppen@open.ac.uk

**Mobile:** +44 (0)786 6977 184

**Address:** Department of Geography, Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA

*Alternatively, if have you questions or concerns about the conduct of this study please contact the project supervisor Professor Gillian Rose, The Open University, UK at:*

*gillian.rose@open.ac.uk*

### **Giving your consent to participate**

If you have read the above information and are willing to participate in the research, please complete the consent form on the next page. Please return your completed forms to Jan van Duppen (details above).

**Participant Information Sheet**

<i>Please tick the appropriate boxes</i>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Taking Part</b>		
I have read and understood the project information sheet above.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in the project, which may include being interviewed and observed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I hereby give permission that the interview with me may be recorded.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I do not have to give any reasons why I no longer want to take part.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Use of the information I provide for this project</b>		
I understand my personal details such as phone number and address will <i><b>not</b></i> be revealed to people outside the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I hereby give permission that images in which I appear may be used in <i>non-web based</i> research outputs, such as presentations at conferences, academic publications, and research reports.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I hereby give permission that images in which I appear may be used in <i>online</i> research outputs, such as web pages, online publications, and research reports.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Please choose <b>one</b> of the following two options:</i>		

OPTION 1 - I would like my real name to be used in project outputs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
OPTION 2 - I would <b>not</b> like my real name to be used in project outputs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Please use the following pseudonym instead: _____		
<b>So we can use the information you provide legally</b>		
I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials related to this project to Jan van Duppen (principal investigator).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Name of Participant:**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Principal Investigator:**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D. Coding List

### Coding List

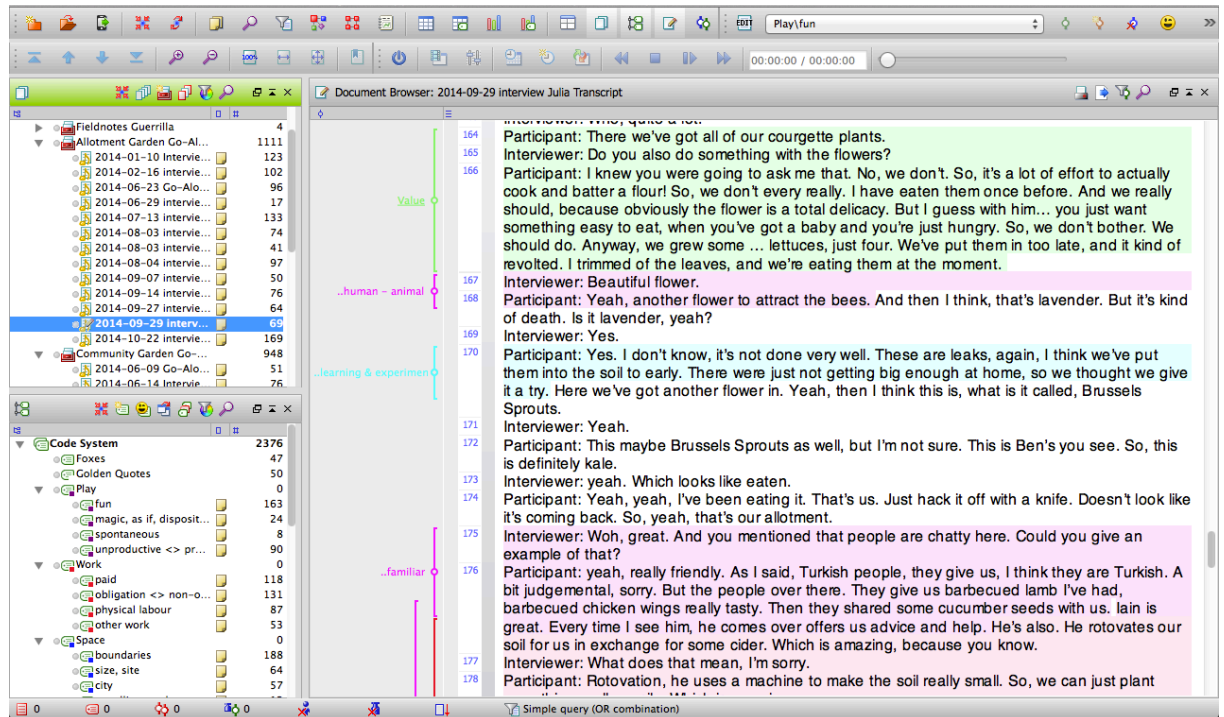
Play	
fun	having fun whilst gardening, cracking jokes, the joy of tidying up, the enjoyment of doing
magic, as if, disposition	as if, disposition, 'stepping out of the real' ,seriousness, 'only for fun', imaginations
spontaneous	spontaneous instances
unproductive $\diamond$ productive	The pleasures of a sense of achievement. And for example the frustration of not having something on ones hands in the community garden. Is it satisfactory to not be concerned with the outcomes and/or frustrating not to be able to do something?
Work	
paid	paid work, talk about their professional occupation
obligation $\diamond$ non-obligation	Multiple meanings of volunteering. The need to keep on top of the garden. It requires work, the plants make you work, things like 'looking after plants' 'taking care of the plot' 'keeping on top of the weed'. 'it does need watering' is another an example of how plants co-constitute the garden practice, once they're there, they need looking after. Sense of belonging with the volunteering makes one feel guilty when not participating.
physical labour	the (hard) physical work of gardening. digging etc.
other work	other things that relate to notions of work
Space	
boundaries	Talk about boundaries experienced between spaces. The distributed practice of gardening? bringing plants from



	community garden to balcony.
size, site	Talk about the size of the garden. And talk about the characteristics of the site.
city	Comments on the 'urban setting'. Things that come up that relate to the city. For example, how is the community garden situated in Dalston.
travelling seeds	Seeds travelling between pots, plots and places.
Time	
seasons	accounts that mention the seasons and how they influence the garden practice
routines	descriptions of activities during a day, and how the gardening sits within their everyday life
negotiating time-space	negotiating time to garden in everyday life. but also negotiating a future for the garden, the struggle for the 'meanwhile garden'
Embodied	
sensorial	the senses: see, hear, touch, smell, taste, eat
sounds	
smell	
touch	
see	
eat	
snack	eating straight from the plant. eating secretly
corporeal	accounts that relate to the 'body', for example talk about doing exercise and tiredness.
mental (flow)	being absorbed in, relaxation of the mind, the affective? experience of stress; dealing with tense situations...

Practices	
learning & experimenting	talk about learning how to garden, and experiments being made. embodied knowlegdes? visceral learning?
talking about gardening	accounts that allude to the joy of talking about gardening
gardening things and their use	garden tools and how they are used, the role of objects like plastic bottles, sheds in the garden practice
Sociality	
chance	chance encounters whilst gardening, also, 'eavesdropping' in the garden (overhearing conversations of other visitors)
human - animal	descriptions of encounters between people and animals, how do gardeners respond to snails and foxes?
rule bound	Encounters bounded by rules, sites of contestation.
familiar	ongoing encounters between gardeners (that know each other), building relationships through for example the sharing of vegetables.
working together <math>\diamond</math> alone	accounts on working alone and working together in the gather.
Value	how gardeners evaluate, value, their and other people's practice
Childhood	references to childhood as a way of making sense of the garden practice

## Screenshot of coded interview in MAXQDA11 Qualitative Analysis Software Program





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